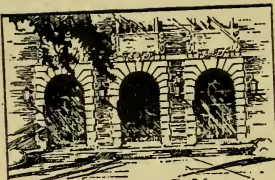


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THE
PARSON'S DAUGHTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“ SAYINGS AND DOINGS,” &c.

“ One child he had, a daughter chaste and fair,
His age's comfort, and his fortune's heir.
They called her EMMA :—”

PRIOR.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE PARSON'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

—— “ Is not the elder

By nature pointed out for preference ?

Is not his right enrolled amongst those laws

Which keep the world's vast frame in beauteous order ?”

Rowe.

“ IN France,” says one of the most accomplished writers of the day, treating of French statistics, “ there is no primogeniture ;” a startling fact at first sight ; but for which, upon a little consideration, we can find an easy solution. The fair authoress means to say that there is no law of primogeniture in that happy and well-regulated country.

We have not the slightest intention of going into a discussion upon the merits of such a law, or the advantages of its abrogation; but we have to put before the reader an example of the effects its existence sometimes produces, in the person of the Right Honourable Lady Frances Sheringham.

He who denounced commingled pride and poverty as one of the bitterest curses of mankind, could never have found a better illustration of his principle than in the daughter of a nobleman, accustomed through life to all the splendour and luxury properly incidental to her station, mixing with society on terms of equality with all that is great and gay by which she is surrounded, suddenly bereft by the death of her father of all the advantages and conveniences of the paternal roof, and sent forth upon the world by an elder brother (now become alike the depositary of all the family wealth as well as all the family honours,) to seek protection and a home.

To this disadvantage, (the only alloy perhaps to the scheme of society to which it belongs,) may be attributed many of those ill-assorted matches made by ladies of quality, and the innumerable indiscretions and even faults

sometimes too justly ascribed to the younger branches of noble families. They are, in fact, proud and poor ; and the desire of maintaining an appearance suitable to the rank and station to which they were born, without the adequate means of doing so fairly and prudently, leads them into excesses and difficulties which not unfrequently bring the honorary titles, which they are by courtesy permitted to assume, into contempt and ridicule.

But if these happen to be the results of indiscretions committed by persons of high notions and low means, of large expenses and small incomes, who, regardless of those considerations by which more honestly inclined and better regulated persons may be supposed to shape their career through life, launch into extravagances unjustifiable by their finances, what must be the pain and mortification of a noble lady, who, satisfied of the irreproachability of her conduct, full of the consciousness of her nobility, sensitively alive to the respect due to her exalted rank, and anxious beyond measure to maintain the place in society to which her birth entitles her, feels herself so constrained by circumstances as to be unable to move with comfort or even ease in the sphere to which she naturally belongs, and

who, after having married for love, finds herself at fifty-four, a widow, still handsome in person and vivacious in disposition, with a pennyless son of five-and-twenty, and a jointure of six hundred a-year.

Such was exactly the position of Lady Frances Sheringham a few years since, as the daughter of the Marquess of Pevensey. She had been the belle of her time, had given the tone to society, and her name to bonnets, and with some of the yet surviving beaux of a previous age had been, in her day, when she was eighteen, and men drank wine, a "standing toast."

Like herself, the husband of Lady Frances was of noble blood. The Honourable Herbert Sheringham was the second son of Lord Weybridge, and had borne off his charming prize from a host of ardent rivals in all the enthusiasm of triumphant love; nor was their mutual happiness marred for an hour until the death of his noble father-in-law, the Marquess, with whom they had almost entirely lived after their marriage: that melancholy event, however, reduced the honourable husband and the right honourable lady to the necessity of establishing *themselves*, and, moreover, of supporting them-

selves upon an income not exceeding twelve hundred pounds per annum.

The personal fortune of Lady Frances was neither more nor less than ten thousand pounds, settled upon herself. Mr. Sheringham's income was derived from two offices which he held about the court, luckily just so unimportant as not to be affected by a change of ministry, but which pleased his vanity, and amused his mind, by bringing him frequently in contact with his sovereign, and the circle by which he was surrounded. To what particular circumstances he was indebted for these small advantages nobody ever exactly ascertained, because his father, besides having very little interest, professed whiggism in politics, which, however meritorious abstractedly as a trait of virtue, patriotism, and magnanimity, does not of itself appear a sufficient reason for his son's appointment to two *quasi* sinecures during the existence of a Tory government. It was generally thought that Lady Frances, anxious to make the man of her heart something, had exerted that influence which such a being could not fail to possess, in his favour, to gain the ear of one at whose disposal such advantages are placed,—no matter, Sheringham

and the Lady Frances were as happy a couple as are ordinarily seen in this world, and when he was called away to a better, the recollection that she had nothing left to live upon, but her jointure (arising chiefly from her own fortune, which, as has just been stated had been settled upon herself,) of six hundred a year, was not the most painful one with which her ladyship had to contend.

Besides this jointure, Mr. Sheringham left Lady Frances one son, the counterpart of his lamented sire, in whom all her hopes and wishes for the future centred; and as her grief for the death of her husband wore off, the feeling of deep regret for one she had lost, gave place to another of intense anxiety for the welfare and success of him who was yet preserved to her.

And as he grew up, so did that anxiety grow too. At Eton he received all he ever had of education; and when at his father's death it became necessary for his mother to come to some decision as to his future prospects, the struggle with her feelings was by no means an agreeable one. Fortune he had none, save what might be left at his mother's disposal when she should shuffle off this mortal coil; and as for a profession, the idea that her beloved George Augustus Fre-

derick should be obliged to do any thing to earn his bread was most repugnant to her ladyship's principles and feelings. Her brother, the Marquess of Pevensey, was extremely kind to his nephew, and she hoped for some assistance from him ; but what could *he* do ? he was himself married, and had already nine right honourable lords and ladies to provide for ; and as for interest he had none, since, like her late father-in-law, his lordship was a rigid oppositionist, but without either talent or influence sufficient to alarm his adversaries into an adoption of the soothing system.

George Augustus Frederick, however, having in the course of his domiciliation at Eton contracted a love of boating, and having moreover once worn the uniform of a naval officer at one of those morning masquerades peculiar to that great and celebrated school, had taken it into his head that he should like to be a sailor, and although the Lady Frances so much objected to the filthy smell of ships, and the horrid sickness at sea, and the danger of battles, and all the other evils " fishified flesh" is heir to, the recollection of Howe, and Duncan, and Nelson, counteracted in some degree her aversion from the service, and at length, by dint of solicitation on

the part of the boy, and persuasion on that of her friends, George Augustus Frederick was fairly launched as a midshipman, under the especial care and protection of her friend and distant relation the Honourable Captain Baltyorum.

The great affair of George Augustus Frederick Sheringham's start in life, unpromising as it was, having been achieved, Lady Frances began *her* course of existence, which comprised a round of visits, a month at Lord Pevensey's—a fortnight with the Dawson's in Gloucestershire—three weeks with the Howards in Derbyshire—ten days at one house and six days at another, till the London season began, when with a pair of job horses doing sixteen week's work in three months, and rooms at a hotel, where she never dined, her ladyship, from being extremely agreeable, rather odd, and particularly well versed in the popular topics of ordinary conversation, contrived to keep her head above water, and be as gay and as lively as her more wealthy associates; still managing to make an allowance to her son to the full extent permitted by his captain, and by him considered adequate to the wants and wishes of a Marquess's grandson located in the midshipmen's berth of one of his Majesty's frigates.

But days wore on, and George Augustus Frederick grew up to manhood; his time as midshipman was served, and he had passed his examination, when another term of service as flag-lieutenant to a distant connexion in India was entered upon and concluded, with promotion to the rank of commander, and the enjoyment of the moderate half-pay of seven shillings and sixpence per diem, without a chance of further employment. And thus at the age of five-and-twenty, poor George Augustus Frederick had reached what to him was likely to be the head of his profession, and found himself again at home, and without any earthly pursuit. Still, however, warmly attached to his lady-mother, he could not but feel satisfied that the pittance of income which he derived from his commission rendered a regular drain upon her slender funds unnecessary; and anxious as she was to enjoy as much of his society as he could spare her, he generally passed the intervals of his engagements at her hotel.

But Lady Frances, delicate when young, and unused in childhood or youth to much exertion, became every season more and more sensible of the inconveniences of her position in society. The constant round of parties, to her who had

no daughter to bring out, and no point to carry, injured her constitution ; and (which people say was still more important to her ladyship) her complexion ; and she suddenly resolved to withdraw herself from the fitful, feverish life which she had so long been leading, and settle herself, for at least eight months in the year, in some quiet retirement at a distance from London, where her health might be recruited by the salubrity of the air, and her expenses contracted by the cheapness of living ; and having hit upon this prudent design, she imparted to her darling son the intention she had formed, and the project she had originated.

To him, the arrangement was particularly agreeable ; for although no man of worldly feelings ever permits his ears to be open to the passing observations upon his nearest relations, or allows his eyes to see the sneers and shrugs which sometimes are exhibited upon the arrival or departure of an excellent and exemplary parent, George could not be so deaf or so blind, try earnestly as he might, as not to perceive that Lady Frances, a widow in her fifty-fifth year, was a totally different object in society from Lady Frances a maiden of eighteen, or a wife of twenty-three.

All the little playfulness of expression—the downcast eye—the flushing cheek—the palpitating heart—the lips—the smiles—the looks themselves were there; and such is the slow and minute progression of the ravages of time, that in the constant appeal of beauty to her looking-glass, their effects are not perceptible; and as Gay, or, perhaps, his sarcastic assistant, Swift, tells us of the “mother’s daughter”

Each time she looks she’s fonder grown,
Thinks every charm grown stronger;
But, alas! vain maid, all eyes but your own,
Can see you are not younger.

The country, however, was the thing; and the the moment her ladyship had possessed herself of this desire for rurality, every maxim of her town-spent life was exploded; her taste was now all for green fields and trees, and shade and flowers. A dairy was her delight; a farm-yard her hobby; daisy-picking and violet-plucking the only pursuits she really loved; and when she recollected the many happy hours she had spent in her dear father’s time at Grimsberry Castle, Cumberland, in her sainted mother’s conservatory, and the American par-

terre, her anxiety to be fixed in a cottage and a garden became romantically ungovernable.

To satisfy this predominating passion, and put into execution her scheme of retirement, Lady Frances gave up all visits, all calls, all notes, and all messages, and drove incessantly and continuously, day after day, her attenuated job horses from Christie's to Squibb's, from Squibb's to Robins's, from Robins's to Winstanley's, from Winstanley's to Phillips's, and from Phillips's to Christie's again, in search of a villa; and many were the journies her ladyship took, and many the disappointments she met with. The old joke of the hanging wood was nothing to the sufferings she underwent; and in one instance, when she had travelled thirty miles to look at a cottage which was described as having two views of the Thames, she found her hopes blighted, by discovering that the only method of seeing that beautiful river twice on the property was by looking out of the garret windows, whence it was just visible at high water, and looking down into the cellars, in which it regularly made its appearance at every spring tide.

At length, however, such a "particulars" was put into her ladyship's hands by one of the

most fashionable auctioneers, that there could be no doubt or hesitation as to a drive down to see the place. The only thing against it, was its name ; but *that*, with female readiness, her ladyship thought might be changed. It was called Slug Grove—but then there were serpentine walks and sloping lawns, towering oaks and graceful willows drooping into chrystal lakes ; an elegant saloon opening into a conservatory, with every requisite office and outbuilding ; thirty acres of land immediately round the house, and a pew in the church—all capable of great improvement.

With all due respect for the auctioneer's modest merits, this last particular was assuredly the most correct : the serpentine walks were mere wriggles, the sloping lawns, slippery beds of swamp, the drooping willows, stumpy objects with no more curl in their branches than there is in a dancing girl's hair at four o'clock in the morning ; the chrystal lake was a duck pond covered with weeds like green crown-pieces, and the conservatory, into which a drawing-room (paper damp and ceiling cracked), sixteen feet by fourteen, opened, turned out to be a glassless greenhouse, in which grew a plentiful crop of nettles and marsh-mallows.

The offices were in the last state of dilapidation, the kitchen chimney had fallen down, and a wandering hen had established her nest in the oven; and as to the pew in the church, it was located in the gallery immediately over the pulpit, the sounding-board of which excluded not only its tenants from the sight of the preacher, but from the sound of his voice; while the thirty acres of land consisted of marsh, bog, and clay, agreeably and plentifully stocked with thistles, chickweed, and dandelion.

The house had once been white, but the tear-like drippings from its various windows had, during the several years of its unoccupancy, left deep green marks upon the walls; and a sort of verandah, which had once adorned its front towards the road, after having become filthily dirty, had fallen through, and left the canvas, which once formed its alternated black and green covering, dangling in ribbands amongst its trelliage columns.

“This is not comfortable, George,” said her ladyship. “I am dying for a cottage; but this is more humble than even I desire. The slopes are mere slops, and the chrystal lake looks a pool at commerce filled with green counters.”

“ Yes,” said George, “ playing with leaves for lives.”

“ La, ma’am,” said the gardener, who was showing the premises, “ that weedy stuff is of no signification at all as it were ; a little patience and half a dozen ducks would get rid of all that in a fortnight.”

“ Ducks, sir,” said Lady Frances. “ Ducks on a chrystal lake—what an idea !”

The man, who saw that Slug Grove did not exactly correspond with her ladyship’s notions of comfort or the picturesque, caught up George, who was in an under tone expressing to his mother his conviction that the place “ would not do ;” and anxious to be of use to the house-hunters, suggested that there were two or three other villas in the neighbourhood to be let.

“ There is Belvidere, ma’am,” said the gardener, “ a very nice retired place, right opposite the limekilns, as you turn down to the Duke’s Head near the turnpike ; and then there is Belle-Vue, built to match it, on the other side, the front windows of which overlook Squire Harbottle’s stables and kennels ; besides which it has a great convenience in hearing his honour’s house clock, which strikes every hour, chimes the quarters, and plays Rule Britannia and

the hundredth psalm tune, two hundred and fifty times in the four and twenty hours.

“And who is Squire Harbottle,” said George.

“He’s a man of large fortune, sir,” said the gardener; “who seems never to know how to spend money enough; he buys every thing he can lay his hands on, right and left. He keeps the hounds here, and has his house full of company from year’s end to year’s end; he shoots a good deal and drinks a good deal more than he shoots, sir; but he’s uncommon affable.”

“Is he married?” said George, who had at sea known a namesake, but, as it turned out, not a relation of his.

“Yes, sir,” replied the man, “and has got as handsome a lady for a wife as ever trod shoe leather; the kindest, sweetest lady as ever breathed. They say the squire is rather too rough in his ways, and too boisterous like for her, for she’s as gentle and as quiet as a lamb.”

“Is there any other place to let,” said Lady Frances, who took no great interest in the praises of the Squire’s lady, “besides this Belvidere and Belle-Vue which you talk of?”

“Yes, ma’am,” said the man, “there’s Dale Cottage; but I don’t think that would suit such gentlefolks as you. It’s all thatched, with case-

ment windows, and covered over with nasty ivy, and buried in trees: my master, which owned this property, hated trees; down he had them smash, smooth. ‘None a your great great long helms, and hashes, and hoaks, for me,’ he used to say, ‘a sucking up the nourishment and robbing the ground as is under ’em;’ and to be sure there is no counting for taste; but as I says sometimes to my old missus, I do think, trees is the greatest eyesores in the country as can possible be.”

“I should like to see Dale Cottage,” said George, who having in his disposition an inherent turn for the conviviality of such men as Squire Harbottle, and an equally amiable turn for the society of such women as the squire’s lady, began to fancy that he should less object to a domiciliation at Binford than it before struck him he should.

And accordingly to Dale Cottage they went, Snaith, so was the tree-hater called, leading them across the slippery slopes by the side of the weedy pond, and by the quagmire near the gate, through part of the village, to the object of their inquiries. It burst upon the sight of the visitors in its most picturesque point of view. Screened from the road, and commanding

a lovely prospect, it seemed to offer quiet and repose, and to promise the realization of Moore's beautiful anticipation, who says, or rather sings—

“ I said if there's peace to be found in the world,
A heart that is humble might hope for it here.”

It was one of the prettiest things imaginable ; its interior was a perfect snuggerly ; taste and judgment had combined in its decoration ; and although here and there the envious damp had left its mark in some of the corners and crannies of its well-proportioned living-rooms, it was altogether the very thing Lady Frances wanted, and the very thing George liked, and accordingly, after a very brief debate, the resolution final was arrived at, that there they would set themselves down ; and, in pursuance of this determination, after having opened the preliminaries with the resident referee, they were shewn over the gardens and grounds, visited all the rooms, ascertained what they should do still more to improve it, and furthermore engaged the requisite workmen to put every thing in order for the reception of furniture and themselves in a fortnight at the latest from the day of first visiting it.

From the gentleman with whom George had to negotiate the affair, he derived much information as to the state of the little world at Binford, in which, as in all the small country towns and large villages of England, the good and bad passions of mankind were all at work, and where the charitable feelings and evil desires, the subtle designs and little jealousies of human nature were in as high a state of perfection as in the more important and elevated circles of society.

It appeared upon investigation that Binford possessed two very attractive qualities to persons of small fortune and delicate health: it had the reputation of salubrity and cheapness, and the consequence was that it was thickly populated with ladies who, if not of equal rank with Lady Frances, possessed nearly a similar income, the result of which commixture of matured widows and matronly virgins was the constant irritation of the whole neighbourhood upon the slightest provocation.

Then, besides these foreigners to the land, and emigrants from other places, there were the regular inhabitants, who appeared to emulate the little jealousies of the exclusive coterie, and lived in the most unremitting hostility with each

other, gilding their countenances with smiles, and rather exhibiting by a worrying course of civility of conduct, than by any open declaration, the envy, and jealousy, and uncharitableness so generally prevalent in such communities.

Who that drives through Binford, and sees the elaborated smartness of Mr. Bunce's best drawing-room window curtains, and the dazzling brightness of his brazen knocker, can doubt that the graceful folds of the one and the laboured splendour of the other are invented and contrived to place the attorney's house and appurtenances far before that of Mr. Popjoy the apothecary, &c.; or who that beholds the *pernickety* neatness of the pebbly pavement in front of Miss Whalebone's retreat from the world, can hesitate to believe that its niceness and prettiness are destined to excite the envious admiration of Mr. Bookman, master of the "Binford classical and commercial academy," and furnish conversation for her opposite neighbour Mr. Pugh the churchwarden.

The Rector, whose name was Lovell, it seemed was a widower, the father of an only daughter, the pride and darling of his heart, the prop of his house, the comfort of his declining years. She

was fair, gentle, mild, and unassuming, highly accomplished, but extremely reserved; distant and cold to strangers, but with a disposition affectionate, and a mind pure and unspotted as the driven snow.

From the contending influences and interests which agitated his flock, Lovell had always contrived to keep himself surprisingly free; and considering the character and principles of the *seigneur du village*, he deserved no small credit for his neutrality.

Mr. Harbottle was a curious specimen of the almost extinct race of country squires. A swaggering, boisterous, bragging, drinking fellow; hard-headed, hard-hearted, passionate, egotistical, self-opiniated, vain to an incalculable degree of every thing he himself possessed, and of the means which he had of accumulating the finest and most expensive articles of use or ornament; but vainer than of every thing else he had, was he of his wife, of whom we need only repeat the gardener's unsophisticated eulogium, to describe her to perfection. "She was as handsome a lady as ever trod shoe-leather; the kindest, sweetest, lady as ever breathed."

The association of this couple was strange;

but she humoured his eccentricities with so much good taste, seemed to be stone blind to his faults, which glared upon every body else, and gave him so much credit for good nature, which he did not possess, that she contrived to make the constantly varying visitors at their house believe, that she was as happy with him as she deserved to be; with those who knew them better, this amiable game was very difficult to play.

His habits and pursuits linked him more with his immediate dependants in the adjoining town than to his more suitable companions in the surrounding country, and accordingly the whole presentable population of Binford were kept in a perpetual agitation from the excitement, produced by the frequent, almost unremitting invitations to the Hall, where festivity and hilarity were the order of the day and night.

The only person with whom Mrs. Harbottle from choice associated, was Miss Lovell; she was frequently, indeed, almost constantly, her companion during the mornings. The habits and pursuits of her father led him to enjoy a quieter life than that which he could have lived in Harbottle's society, and his visits to the Squire's dinners were few and far between.

Emma Lovell, therefore, was seldom seen in the evening circle at her friend's—that they *were* friends, events which have occurred since the period now spoken of, will amply prove.

The brief history of the state of affairs at Binford which is here given, in order to put the reader a little into the secret, George Sheringham received at the hands of Mr. Bunce, the attorney at law, with whom he had to talk over the arrangements for renting Dale Cottage; and if Mr. Bunce were somewhat more verbose in his descriptions, and rather more explicit in his illustrations, the reader has the pith of his narrative, which, as he may not be, (as George and Mr. Bunce were, during the detail,) sitting after dinner, sipping his wine, may equally well suffice for the purpose, with a more protracted and elaborated detail of parish matters.

CHAPTER II.

“The claims of ‘the country’ are paramount.”

PARL. SPEECHES.

“MERCY on us, how time flies !” said Lady Frances Sheringham to her son George. “Three weeks have passed since we first saw Dale Cottage, and those odious painters and paper-hangers are still there. My patience is nearly exhausted. Here is June, and we still in London.”

“My dear mother,” said George, “to you,

who till this very year have been in the habit of considering the June of nature the January of fashion, and have valued the opening beauties of spring only as they gave the signal for opening the houses of your friends, this little delay cannot be so very irksome; another fortnight, and we shall be located in our new residence."

"And do tell me, dear," said her ladyship, "that Mrs. Harbottle—is she a person to like? Shall I like her—will she suit *me*?"

"That I cannot pretend to say," replied her son, (who, it may be as well to observe, had just returned to his mother in London, from a second visit to Dale Cottage, which he had paid to it alone, in order by his presence to stimulate the different workmen in their labours,) "but I think I never saw a more charming person. The man is a monster, without one redeeming quality that I could discover in a seven hours' sitting."

"Ah," said Lady Frances, "I must judge for myself; it very often happens, that where so large a portion of admiration is claimed by a lady, there is proportionately less left for her husband. They were civil and hospitable, and all that?"

"Oh!" said George, "if men could eat *en-*

trées of gold, or drink magnums of liquid silver, so much the greater pleasure to Mr. Harbottle to feed them ; but there is a coarseness, a roughness, a something about him, repugnant to my feelings, and which seem quite to subdue, and overcome her.”

“ Ah, I see,” replied her ladyship, “ you have arrived at the point of commiserating the sufferings of a woman, who, I have no doubt, is as happy as a princess ; and having once taken that course, the chances are, that your hatred of *him* will turn into some marvellously foolish affection for *her*.”

“ No,” said George, “ that is not likely ; Mrs. Harbottle seems to be provided already with a commiserating friend ; but there was that Miss Lovell, who went away after luncheon to dine, as she told me, with her sick father, the rector, of whom my loquacious friend, Mr. Bunce, did most assuredly not say half enough. She is lovely—absolutely lovely ; but if she were modelled in alabaster, or chiselled in marble, her beauty could not well be colder than it is at present.”

“ *Mauvaise-honte*, George,” said Lady Frances, “ the mere awkwardness of rusticity. I never give credit to those icicles for any thing

but shyness, and a notion that it looks fine to be prudish, and well-bred to be disagreeable. However, I think by your account we shall have plenty of specimens to select from, and as of course Dale Cottage will give the *ton*, we may pick and choose as we like."

"I fear that Dale Cottage will never be more than secondary at Binford," said George; "the unbounded wealth of Harbottle, and the unlimited circulation of it, the daily recurrence of feasts—actual feasts—and all the other attractions of the Hall, will naturally overcome our otherwise undoubted claims to precedence."

"Oh!" exclaimed her ladyship, "I have no intention of making a struggle against the aristocracy of wealth; I shall trust to the good sense and good feeling of my neighbours to put me at my ease; and I think with a little display of ingenuity, and a knowledge of how things *should* be done, we may contrive to rally round us, some of the best amongst them, and give them such a reception as they are not quite used to, in their somewhat obscure village."

"Let us begin," said George, "with treating our future home with greater respect. Nobody believes the place in which he is resident obscure. You may rely upon it, the helpless

missionary at Fernando Po, or the isolated resident of the Seychelles, thinks, 'to himself,' that the spot he inhabits is a place of the greatest importance to the whole world, and that the eyes of all Europe at, least, are upon him."

"That may be quite true," answered her ladyship, "but I imagine the Binfordites will have no objection to a little refinement of their style; and when one considers with what very small means, good taste and judgment may contrive very agreeable things, I think I may flatter myself that the little reunions at Dale Cottage will not be altogether neglected, for the more profuse displays of Mr. Harbottle's mansion."

Thus it will be seen, that Lady Frances, driven by circumstances from being a follower of the great world, had already pre-determined to become the leader of a little one, and, preferring to reign in Binford rather than serve in London, had begun to anticipate gaieties of her own in the country, as ill suited to her income, as the enjoyment of gaieties provided by others, in town, were to her constitution.

George said nothing at the time to dissuade his lively parent from the course she seemed to have chalked out for herself, for, to tell the

truth, his mind and thoughts connected with a residence at Binford, were fixed upon other objects than “economical” suppers, or “judicious” breakfasts. He had seen enough of Emma Lovell, in the morning visit he had paid to the Hall, to assure himself that time and a continued association with such a person were very likely to entangle him, and if matters went on favourably, fix him for life.

This love at first sight, has often been a subject of ridicule amongst slow-going people; but nevertheless it has frequently turned out to be both serious and lasting. There is a sympathy between minds and persons, which in all cases, even of common intercourse, speedily attaches certain individuals to each other, who neither attract, nor are attracted by certain others. It is an old remark, that no man ever looked on, at a game of chance or skill, played by two people, both previously unknown to him, without, in less than five minutes, feeling an interest for the success of one of them, over the other; and there certainly are some undefinable points of accordance, some harmonies of thought or expression, of which we are not ourselves clearly conscious, but which almost immediately attract the attention, and fix our

thoughts upon the individual, who, as unconsciously as ourselves, happens to possess them.

George Augustus Frederick Sheringham had flirted and made the *aimable* in every quarter of the globe. The blondes of the Baltic, the brunettes of the Mediterranean, the bulbous beauties of the Cape, and the fair yam-stalks of St. Helena, had all in their turn received his attentions, and even reciprocated his smiles ; but there was something about Miss Lovell which had the power of utterly changing the character of his admiration. With all the other women he had seen, he could laugh, and flirt, and talk ; and when the laughing, and flirting, and talking were over, he could take his hat and go : and the next day, in some other place, repeat a similar routine of entertainment with some other beauty, and yet his heart be safe as if “twice cased in steel.” Emma Lovell he had seen but once, but the effect of their meeting upon him had been very different from those produced during his previous butterfly course of flower sipping. Day by day, and hour by hour, he felt that longing, wearying, sickening pain of anxious hope to see her again, which those alone can appreciate who have endured it ; and the weeks seemed lengthened into

years, and the days to weeks, until the final announcement of the chief artificer at Dale Cottage, gave them notice that Dale Cottage was ready for the upholsterers and furnishers.

No sooner did Lady Frances receive this happy announcement than she proceeded to order from Gillows, and Morel, and all the best handicraftsmen, each of his sort, the most elegant furniture most suited to the style of her new residence; and, in the outset of her economical retirement, incurred a load of debt, which her ladyship's gross income, superadded to her gallant son's half-pay, would not, if specially reserved for that purpose, liquidate under four or five years. But then she had such excellent judgment in these matters, and knew so well what should be done—and then the daughter of the second, and sister of the third Marquess of Pevensey, could not submit to be pitied by Mr. and Mrs. Harbottle, and therefore, despairing of coming into Binford upon an equality with those plebeians, as far as money went, her ladyship determined to take the lead in *her* line, and submit to the quiet and respectable population of that peaceable, but much neglected village, what her ladyship was certain would be for *her* a triumphant comparison be-

tween the magnificence of wealth and the magnificence of good taste.

It was a very rural hornet's nest into which her ladyship was about to thrust her delicate hands, but hornet's nest it was ; and little did her ladyship anticipate the complicated results of her occupancy of the cool sequestered grot, at which she arrived just at the close of the month of July, 1830.

Sheringham's first anxiety on his arrival at their "shady, blest retreat," appeared chiefly directed to the securing his mother a more commodious pew in the church, than that which in point of right belonged to Dale Cottage ; and Lady Frances, who was an extremely well regulated person, and a constant attendant at divine service, but who had never before perceived any symptoms of such zealous activity upon the particular subject of her accommodation when there, on the part of her son, was amazingly puzzled at finding herself left alone on the very first evening of their arrival at Binford, by her darling and dutiful George, who, in his anxiety for her convenience, had left his "fruit untasted and his wine untouched," in order to visit the Rector himself, to arrange the matter, with which, in fact, he had infinitely less to do

than the churchwardens, who had already evinced every disposition to behave handsomely in that respect to a lady of his mother's rank and station.

Those who recollect that the Rev. Mr. Lovell had a daughter, will perhaps attribute a portion of the filial devotion of Commander George Augustus Frederick Sheringham to an affection somewhat less instinctive ; and those who have known what it is to be caught in a trap, set for another, may perhaps sympathize with our young and gallant friend, in the result of his visit to the venerable pastor.

Sheringham called at the parsonage. His heart beat as his cold hand pulled the bell at the gate ; an affirmative to his inquiry, (almost needless,) if Mr. Lovell were at home, brought him speedily to his drawing-room door. He was announced, and the excellent Rector received him with the greatest cordiality. He was alone, reading, the tea equipage was on the table ; Emma was not there, the chair she had occupied, however, remained in its place. Sheringham seated himself : he would have given the world to inquire after her—to name her name even—but no, he dared not : such is the consciousness of concealed affection, that the sim-

plest question, or the most common-place observation, which any body and every body might otherwise ask or make, if it bear upon the point of interest, upon the one treasured object of our solicitude, seems to us, from its importance to ourselves, to be too important to be made or asked.

“How beautiful the view is from this window,” said Sheringham.

“The prospect is charming,” said Mr. Lovell, “and there is a serenity in the weather, and a buoyancy in the atmosphere this evening, which quite refreshes me. As an invalid, Mr. Sheringham, I feel these things with a sensibility which, in your state of health and at your time of life, must be almost incomprehensible to you.”

Hereabouts a servant appeared with a teacup, which he placed upon the table.

“You will stay and take some tea, Mr. Sheringham,” said Lovell.

It was the very thing Sheringham had been trying at.—Tea would ensure a subsequent hour (or two perhaps) of Miss Lovell’s society; he would see her in her home, the idol of her father, in the exercise of filial duty, the sight of which, would make her loveliness more lovely.

“I shall be too happy, sir,” said Shering-

ham—and he forthwith surrendered his hat and gloves to the servant, who, having deposited them on a table, proceeded to remove the vacant chair which he concluded Emma had occupied, and place it “in order” against the wall.

“Let the tea be made out of the room,” said Mr. Lovell to the man, and, turning to Sheringham, added, “this is very kind and neighbourly of you, Mr. Sheringham, for this is the first evening for many days that my daughter has dined from home. I felt myself so much better to-day, that I forced her to accept one out of fifty of her friend Mrs. Harbottle’s invitations to dinner, and I feel extremely grateful for your society in her absence.”

If Lovell could have seen the expression of his visitor’s countenance at this announcement, his gratitude might have undergone some qualification; luckily it was getting dark, and Lovell, moreover, was somewhat weak-sighted; but never was man so caught as Sheringham. All that his reverend friend talked, after this disclosure, seemed to his inattentive ear mere gibberish, and the knowledge which he obtained from an observation made by Lovell to the servant, that Miss Lovell would not return from the Hall till half-past eleven, which entirely

precluded the possibility of his waiting for her appearance at home, so completely upset him, that when he did, about ten o'clock, get away, he left upon Mr. Lovell's mind a most unfavourable impression as to his intellectual powers and conversational qualities.

What on earth could be more distressing? And then, when he got to Dale Cottage, to undergo the natural reproaches of his mother, for his abrupt and undutiful desertion of her ! Her ladyship, however, whose mind was still very much alive to all the conduct of *les affaires de cœur*, was so extremely amused by the detail of her son's discomfiture, which he could not resist giving her, that the rest of the evening hung less heavily, and before midnight, the anxious young commander retired to rest, comparatively happy in the consciousness of being in the same village with Emma, and with the certainty of "falling in with her," as he would nautically have phrased it, on the following day.

CHAPTER III.

“ Hail to thee, worthy Timon ; and to all
That of his bounties taste—The five best senses
Acknowledge thee their patron ; and come freely
To gratulate thy plenteous bosom ; the ear,
Taste, touch, smell, all pleas'd from thy table rise,
They only now come, but to feast thine eyes.”

SHAKSPEARE.

BEFORE the next noon had arrived, numerous indeed were the visitors to Dale Cottage. All the coterie, the exclusives of the Paragon, had deposited their tickets, and Harbottle, who accompanied his lovely wife on her visit, insisted upon it that Lady Frances should dine at the Hall, and begin their acquaintance, as he hoped they should maintain it, without ceremony.

Her ladyship accepted the bidding, because it was almost impossible, without rudeness, to decline it ; but, however much policy might induce her to keep up an acquaintance with the Squire and his lady, Mr. Harbottle's manners

and style of conversation were exactly the reverse of her Ladyship's notions of the agreeable. It is said that women love by contraries—that a fair woman admires a dark man, that a short woman admires a tall man, and so on; but however opposite Mr. Harbottle might be in all his inclinations and attributes to Lady Frances, it did not seem probable that the mere force of contrast would in *their* case generate any thing like affection between them.

The first wound which the hard-hearted Squire inflicted upon Lady Frances, was in the shape of a note which arrived about four o'clock from Mrs. Harbottle, dictated by her husband, or rather written in his name, offering to send one of his carriages for her Ladyship, to take her to dinner. At Windsor such things are not rare, and a royal coach may be often seen trotting about the town, just before seven, picking up dowagers and their daughters at their lodgings to carry them to the Castle; but for Mr. Harbottle to make this sort of offer, while Lady Frances had her carriage in her coach-house, and while post-horses were to be hired at the Duke's Head, struck Lady Frances as something particularly presumptuous and impertinent. However, she shrugged up her shoulders, and,

throwing an expression of patient suffering into her fine countenance, sent a verbal message of thanks, and an announcement that she would be ready at the appointed time.

Alas ! poor Lady Frances knew not the extent of the unintentional affront which had been offered to her dignity. At the hour named, the carriage came, and when George Augustus Frederick and his mother approached it, they found already in it, two of the dowagers of the coterie, and Miss Lovell, who had been previously picked up by the amateur omnibus of Binford. All her ladyship said, when she beheld the crowd of strangers, was, “ Well ! ” — but it was uttered in a tone so movingly pathetic, that her son, who had anticipated the many “ rubs ” his mother would meet with, from the sharp corners of Mr. Harbottle’s angular mind, could scarcely refrain from laughing. As for himself, he quietly disposed himself on the coach-box, satisfied that if for a few minutes he might be doomed to be the companion of the coachman, his neighbour at dinner would be that sweetest of all living girls, the Parson’s daughter, who sat within the carriage, amidst the painted dowagers, pale and placid, like a virgin lily in the middle of a bunch of peonies.

The drive was not a long one ; a few minutes brought them to the gates, and subsequently to the door of Binford Hall.

The ladies descended from the carriage, and crossed the hall to the drawing-room, which faces the door. By a new *gaucherie* of the marshalled servants, Miss Oliphant was announced before Lady Frances, and being "first named in the commission," walked into the room before her ; a circumstance which Lady Frances resolved at the moment never so far to forgive, as to invite Miss O. to Dale Cottage upon any of the occasions when the *élite* of the village were summoned.

"Lady Frances, I'm glad to see you," said Harbottle. "Much squeezed, eh?—comfortable carriage, isn't it?—Hobson's build—five hundred and twenty guineas—all snug and comfortable ; a few pounds one way or another, you know, make no difference to me. How are you, Sheringham, how d'ye do? You came on the box—easy, eh—comfortable as a couch—had springs on purpose—not above ten pounds extra—what o' that—as I say, comfort's comfort. What object's money—eh, Ma'am."

The last exclamation was addressed to Mrs. Eaglesfield, another of the dowagers, who ex-

isted upon two hundred a year in the smallest possible cottage.

“I say, Sheringham,” said Harbottle, in an undertone, “don’t you think that’s a pretty hat my wife has got on?—French: I think it very becoming.”

Sheringham, whose skill in millinery was not very profound, said something about Mrs. Harbottle’s making any hat look well.

“Five naps in Paris,” said Harbottle; “paid for it myself—made her a present unawares. She’s not looking well to-day—hot weather—eh?—Do you know Charles Harvey?”

“I had the pleasure of being presented to him the last day I was here,” said Sheringham.

“Capital fellow!” continued Harbottle.—“Harvey, you must be very intimate friends with Mr. Sheringham. I’m sure you’ll hit it off amazingly well. What do you think of the chestnut?”

“Capital hack,” said Harvey.

“How long is it till dinner?” said Harbottle, casting his eye on a French clock, superbly mounted, and supported by the Graces. “I should like to shew Sheringham the chestnut—is that clock right?”

“Those clocks very seldom are,” said Sher-

ingham, who did not exactly know what he was saying, inasmuch as his eyes were fixed upon a much more striking object than a clock during the conversation.

“ Never go right !” said Harbottle ; “ Ha ! ha ! ha ! why that ’s a chronometer—a splendid going clock. I stand none of their nonsense ; a few naps one way or the other make no difference to me. I ordered the fellow to put in good works, just such as Breguer would not serve the French navy with. So he did. Then as to the mounting of it—why, in all the other clocks of that pattern that I’ve ever seen, there are only three Graces, so when the clock stands on the table, you see but one Grace at a time. I ordered the fellow to clap me on a dozen. There they are, you see ; so now, whichever way you look at it, there you see three Graces at once. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Harvey, ring the bell, there’s a good fellow.”

Harvey, was a remarkably agreeable person, with a fine intelligent countenance and a most agreeable manner, and the smile that played over his features, while he implicitly obeyed the mandate of his opulent and imperious host, was not lost upon Sheringham ; nor did the look which succeeded that smile, and which was di-

rected to his opulent host's lady, less escape his observation. They passed over his features as rapidly as the shadow of a cloud flits over the green sward on a bright and breezy day, but they made Sheringham think that there was another *belle* in the house, besides the one he had been ordered to ring, over whom he had some sort of influence.

"How long is it to dinner, sir," said Harbottle to a servant who entered the room.

"The second bell will ring in about five minutes," said the man.

"Five minutes," cried Harbottle; "come Sheringham, come along; we can look at the horses before they dish up—plenty of time—come along."

To his dispraise it must be said, but true it is, Sheringham had not that taste for horses which many very excellent gentlemen have—perhaps his nautical pursuits and amphibious life militated against his sporting propensities; for if truth be to be told, nothing could be more uninteresting to him than poking about a hot stable and looking at the tails and hinder legs of half a score animals about which he could never have any personal interest, compelled, perhaps, by the assiduous at-

tentions of their master to look at the beautiful pasterns of a decided kicker, or go up and test the crest of a confirmed biter—but the die was cast, and out went Sheringham.

“Jenkinson,” holloa’d Harbottle, as he entered the court-yard; “Where’s Jenkinson?”

“He is in the house, sir,” said a helper, who was cleaning harness.

“What the devil is he doing in the house, sir?”

“Helping to wait at dinner, sir,” was the reply.

“Where’s Watt’s?”

“Don’t know, sir.”

“And Hopkins?”

“Can’t say, sir.”

“Have you got a key of the hack stable?”

“Yes, sir.”

Sheringham’s heart sank at the affirmative—at this moment the second bell rang.

“Here, boy,” cried Harbottle, “bring out the chestnut Mr. Harvey rode to day;”—the boy proceeded to obey orders;—“have you,” continued Harbottle, addressing Sheringham, “ever seen my wife’s town chariot?”

“No,” said Sheringham.

“Here, boy—never mind the chestnut—run

and ask Jenkinson for the key of the coach-house."

Away ran the helper, at the bidding of this Timon.

"You *must* just look at that carriage—Hobson again;—he's always my man—but while he is gone just let us look at the chestnut in the stall."

And into the stable they went—and then began a discourse about feet, and shoulders, and shape, and make, which lasted till the boy came, not with the key, but with Jenkinson himself, who appeared suffused with all the heat of exercise and exertion, to state that dinner was served up, and that he believed the company were only waiting his master's appearance in the drawing-room.

"Oh! well, we must go then;" said Harbottle. "I'll shew you the chariot to-morrow, come along—why, how time flies—I can't stop that,—eh, Sheringham?—Ha! ha! ha!"

As they proceeded towards the drawing-room, they were met by several servants, and Harbottle bustled forward, and of course took out Lady Frances; there were two or three of his hunting friends of the party, who, without regard to precedence, or "the order of going," had appropriated each to himself, a lady to lead

to dinner, and Sheringham, although placed next Mrs. Harbottle at table, missed the opportunity he had so anxiously looked forward to, of having on his other hand the gentle Emma, who, in order to complete the series of mishaps which had befallen him, was placed at the same side of the table, so that he was deprived of the only happiness which could have been left for him.—Indeed, it is a question quite worthy of consideration in a discussion of such matters, whether in *his* state of acquaintance with Miss Lovell, his advantage would not have been greater as her *vis à vis*, than as her next neighbour. There is much to be said on both sides, but as far as Sheringham was personally concerned, he certainly would have preferred being, as he would have professionally called it, “alongside the Hooker.”

But if Sheringham lost much by his separation from Emma Lovell, he gained a vast deal by his proximity to Mrs. Harbottle—she was lovely—accomplished—full of taste and feeling, enthusiastic in her admiration of talent, and perfectly qualified to appreciate it—at times animated and volatile, and gay even to wildness, but then there came suddenly over her countenance, and surely over her mind (of

which her countenance was the lovely index) a sudden gloom, which no effort of her's could either check or conceal—the bright blue eyes, which a minute before had sparkled with mirth and joyousness, were dimmed with a tear, as if a sudden consciousness had struck her that for a moment she had been too happy.

Above all things there appeared—if not to the superficial observer, to those who like Sheringham, looked deeper—in the midst of her mirth a nervous anxiety while her husband was present, which those who only saw his empty laugh and heard his ostentatious conversation, could scarcely comprehend—*she* knew him better—his paroxysms of rage were sometimes violent, and the coarse unfeeling observations in which, late in the evening, he was occasionally in the habit of indulging at her expence, mingled as they were with fulsome compliments to her personal attractions, kept her in a state of constant agitation which it was her equally constant endeavour to conceal.

Why had she married him?—the answer, is to be found in his wealth, and the influence wealth gives—her own choice was never consulted; and a nearly bankrupt father, unable to withstand the offer of an alliance by which

his credit was to be saved and his character supported, had forced her into an union with a being, in no one point assimilating with herself. Yet *that* was done—and nothing could be more exemplary than the conduct of Mrs. Harbottle, although with the strangest contrariety of character, Harbottle, after descanting on her beauty, after going to all expenses imaginable for ornaments to decorate her charms, was the first to reproach her, on the slightest appearance of gaiety or liveliness in her conduct, with a desire to attract and captivate, and a diminution of affection for him.

This disposition, brought into action from the excitement produced by two or three bottles of wine, which he was in the daily habit of swallowing, was what she had to battle ; and her greatest anxiety in the management of her bear, was that he should dance amiably before company ; an anxiety, however, which was not always crowned with the most perfect success.

The dinner, which of course exhibited luxury in every possible shape, passed off as dinners generally do, and Mrs. Harbottle having exchanged looks with Lady Frances, and having heard that significant noise from her ladyship's lips, which one of my fair—my fairest—friends, once de-

scribed to me as something between a negative and an affirmative, difficult to be explained, but easily to be understood, gave or rather repeated the signal for moving, and the ladies retired, nothing having occurred during the whole of the banquet worthy of mention or memorandum.

Sheringham active and gallant, stood door in hand as the fair procession quitted the dining-room, and having lingered in vain in the hope of one glance, however transient, from Emma, was returning to his seat, when Harbottle cried out suddenly —

“Sheringham, stop—stop, just where you are for one moment—look at that sideboard—the light falls just right upon it—did you ever see so handsome a sideboard as that—that cost me five hundred and seventy guineas—Morel made it for George the Fourth, but they split about the price.”

“It *is* extremely handsome,” said Sheringham.

“You may say *that*, Master Captain,” exultingly replied the host turning from the contemplation of the costly piece of furni-

ture, with an expression of countenance which seemed to say—*now* I have done it.

And then he proceeded to expatiate upon the absurdity of economy, and the nonsense of caring for twenty pounds one way or another: from which he glanced to his kennel and his dogs, which were the finest in England let the others be where they might; and then his hunters, and his hacks, and so on through every branch of his establishment, moistening his egotism most liberally with huge libations of claret, which he periodically pronounced to be “exquisite,” “splendid,” and “incomparable.”

There is an indescribable sympathy in our nature which I have before endeavoured feebly I fear to describe, which brings individuals more rapidly acquainted with each other in some cases than in others. It was clear that Charles Harvey and Frederick Sheringham were destined to be friends; in the ordinary interchanges of sentiment and opinions, they mutually expressed congenial ideas and feelings, upon the subjects which they cursorily discussed; and when, after a tedious sitting and swallowing, which however obsolete elsewhere, were in full

force at Binford Hall, they quitted the dinner table, either of them was satisfied that the other was a remarkably agreeable person.

In the drawing-room were the ladies—if not quite reduced to the state of the fair sleepers of the American boarding-house, so graphically described by Mrs. Trollope—at least languishing in the last stage of *ennui*. Miss Eaglefield and Miss Oliphant were not companions for Lady Frances, nor, indeed, could Mrs. Harbottle herself pretend to refer to the habits and usages of a great grandfather, to which relation of her own Lady Frances was much accustomed to allude ; and, therefore, they sat patient listeners to the very agreeable conversation of the lady of fashion, although all she said sounded to their “ unaccustomed ears” very much like the fairy tales, and the histories which she recounted of what was actually going on in London, were delivered in a phraseology to them almost as unintelligible as the inscrutable language of Madagascar or the blasphemous absurdities of the “ unknown tongues.”

There had been music—that is to say Emma Lovell had been playing the harp—and had been rewarded with “ very pretty upon my

word," by Lady Frances, who did not add—"considering"—but looked it as expressively as if she had spoken.—The harp stood where Emma had left it, but before Sheringham had been able to get away from the "sublime port and splendid claret," of his magnificent host, she that "loved to touch it" had betaken herself to her paternal roof."—"Again baffled,—thought Frederick,—does she do this on purpose, or is there a fate in it."

"Well, Lady Frances," said Harbottle, "did you think we were lost? I know with you fine folks in London wine is out of fashion,—never out of fashion with me, at least in my own house, where I know what I am drinking—pure, pure unadulterated wine—import it all myself—for as I say to Mrs. Harbottle, what can it signify, a little more expense to secure what is truly good—of course with people of fashion and that sort of persons who live from hand to mouth, a retail wine merchant is the only man—but not with me—this is very handsome Dresden, Lady Frances," continued he, helping himself to some coffee, "I got this a bargain. Ha! ha! ha!"

"I don't like Dresden *chaney*," said Lady

Frances, "my poor grandfather had some very fine, which I believe my brother Pevensey has now; but I never had a taste for it."

"What say you to a little Ecarté," said the master of the house. "Fanny, my dear, see if you can make up a set or two; they won't play high, Lady Frances; you need not be afraid."

"I seldom play cards," said her ladyship, who could have eaten the man alive, for his kind consideration in moderating the scale of *his* play to *her* means.

"Oh, then by Jove! I'll show you the house;" said Harbottle.

"Is not it late, dear," asked his lady; who was convinced that exhibiting the interior of a modern villa, by way of sight, to a native-born of Grimsberry Castle, was but a bad way of entertaining her ladyship, and hoped to divert her husband from his attentions and save her visitor the trouble of mounting narrow staircases to peep into pigeon-holes, and traversing long passages to admire the arrangements of neatly papered bed-chambers and dressing-rooms.

"Late—no—what do you mean by late?" said Harbottle; "you did not discover how

late it was, till we came to you, and all at once you find out how late it is."

"My dear Harbottle," said Harvey, "it is past twelve, and one should not begin a voyage of discovery at such an hour as this."

"As she likes," said Harbottle, looking extremely angry; "have your own way—of course, if Fanny says one thing and I say another, you are the man to side with her, that's natural."

It was clear to Mrs. Harbottle that her bear had done dancing for that night, and, therefore, she felt it best to leave him to himself, just giving Harvey such a look as might induce him to adopt a similar course to that which she intended to follow—namely, to say nothing more.

"Well, Lady Frances," said the Squire, "I'm not to shew you my house to night, that's clear—so we will postpone it till some better opportunity."

Hereabouts entered two or three servants with trays and other implements indicative of supper—crowds of glasses congregated upon vast salvers, surrounding bottles of divers dimensions.

“ Frederick,” said Lady Frances, “ it is getting late, had you not better see—eh—”

“ Oh, the carriage is ordered,” said Harbottle ; “ we always send our friends home—but then all we ask is our own time—if we find the carriage, we must have the company ; and so my lady, your ladyship must have some supper and something hot after. I’ve got some rum in this room as old—aye, as old as you are, I dare say—capital stuff, four and twenty shillings a bottle. Ha ! ha ! ha !”

Rum ! old as herself ! the combination was most revolting, and if the pattering rain against the windows had not given powerful evidence of the sort of night it was, her ladyship would instantly have set out on her pilgrimage to Dale Cottage, and left the Caliban of the village to the full enjoyment of his abominable practices. Her ladyship with difficulty kept her temper, and the manner in which she refused “ any thing,” was not so gracious as her manners generally were.

Sheringham, himself, did not at all dislike the sort of life that was opening upon him—his feelings were not so sensitive, nor were his nerves so delicate as his mother’s ; he enjoyed

the absurdities of Harbottle, without being personally annoyed by his *gaucherie*, and in the conversation of his new friend, Harvey, who had been speaking liberally and loudly in praise of Miss Lovell, anticipated much pleasure and amusement in a circle which, as far as he could judge, his right honourable parent was not very likely to enter more frequently than necessary.

The party, excepting Lady Frances and Mrs. Harbottle, who remained conversing with her visitor, crowded round the little well-stored table, and the elderly ladies, who thought, in spite of Lady Frances's dictum against suppers, that when they were at Rome they should do as Rome does, disposed of a very considerable quantity of cold fowl, tongue, jelly, cream, and other combustibles, as Mr. Harbottle, in his jocose manner, facetiously called them, and did not hesitate to qualify the varied meal with certain potations of Mr. Harbottle's own "brewing," the *fond* of which, was the rum coeval with her ladyship, whose feelings were more than ever outraged, when her tormentor returned to the charge about the rum, and added, "I know the year when it was made, my lady, and I have got a peerage in the library; to-morrow

I'll compare notes—that peerage is the deuce, my lady, there we *do* catch you.”

“ I believe the peerages are vastly incorrect as to dates,” replied her ladyship.

It was not until past one, that Harbottle would hear of the departure of his visitors; then, he permitted the bell to be rung and the carriage ordered; then came the bustle of preparation, and Harvey officiated in supporting Miss Oliphant, while Sheringham performed the same kind office to Miss Eaglefield. Harbottle, himself, affecting great gravity and steadiness, (scarce able to stand,) gave his arm to her ladyship, who took leave of Mrs. Harbottle with mingled feelings of humanity and compassion, and was conducted by her beau, who, wound up all his performances of the evening, and eternally sealed his doom in the estimation of his right honourable visitor, by whispering familiarly to her, as they crossed the hall,—“ I say, don't you go and offer my servants any money for taking you home; they have plenty of wages and plenty to eat and to drink—and I beg you won't—its no use having my horses out at night, if you are to pay for them.”

To describe the look Lady Frances gave the unconscious Harbottle, when he had made this request, would be impossible—the die was cast. She made him no answer—but involuntarily drawing her arm from his, she gave a slight shudder, and stepped into his carriage, as she resolved upon the instant, for the last time.

Sheringham followed his mother into the coach, the door closed, and they drove off; Harbottle saluting them with a view hallo, which made the neighbouring dales and rocks to echo.

CHAPTER IV.

“Ambition! thou art like the pelican,
The parent of a numerous race of cares,
Which prey upon the breast that gives them birth.”

BELLERS.

“THAT’S a mighty agreeable gentleman we dined with yesterday,” said Lady Frances to her son, as she dropped a lump of sugar into her tea cup at breakfast the next morning; “Why Frederick, he is absolutely a monster.”

“I am inclined to think with you,” said her ladyship’s son, “but according to the proverb which the elderly ladies last night quoted, and which suggests doing at Rome what Rome does, I think we may as well live upon terms of

civility with him, so long as we are his neighbours."

"Of civility, decidedly," replied Lady Frances, "but not of intimacy—one is civil to a footman; but I never yet saw any human being with whom, I am sure, I never *could* be intimate, till I made the acquaintance of Mr. Harbottle; and as for his wife, why really—"

"Oh, my dear mother!" interrupted Frederick, "not a word against the wife—she is one of the most interesting specimens of patient suffering I ever beheld."

"I admit that there is a sort of amiable attention in her manner," said her ladyship, "which gives the idea of her being amazingly interested in whatever one talks to her about; but then there is something about her which makes her to me very unsatisfactory; that Miss Lovell, I admit, is pretty."

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Frederick.

"No, not *that*," said Lady Frances, "pretty is the word—a delicate skin, blue eyes, and light hair, *have* their merits; but there again the manner is wanting—the air of a gentlewoman, she has not a notion of it—she sneaks about a

room, as if she were ashamed of herself, and gets out of one's presence as if she had committed some heinous offence.

“ Rely upon it,” said Frederick, “ if Emma Lovell were seen and known, she would catch half the hearts in London—the reserve and coldness which strike you as *gaucherie*, are to me the most attractive points about her. I hate the universal amiability of misses, who smile alike on all around—give me something to win, and something worthy to be won.”

“ Now my dear Frederick,” said Lady Frances, “ all I ask of you, is to do me the favour not to fall in love with any thing here ; Binford is not the emporium at which I should like you to barter your heart—a little harmless flirtation with Mrs. Harbottle I do not interdict, and I dare say she will be vastly happy to enlist you as her gooseberry-picker, but for mercy's sake do not commit yourself in any serious engagement.”

“ It strikes me that my young friend Mr. Harvey already holds the appointment you design for me, in Mrs. Harbottle's establishment.”

“ There we differ,” said her ladyship ; “ that

Mr. Harvey, if I am not mistaken, holds a place much nearer her heart—a gooseberry-picker ought neither to be so young nor so handsome as Mr. Harvey—his duty is to hover about, to watch his patroness's wants and wishes; escort her, if she require it, to the supper room, make way for her and secure a place for her, stay by her, until somebody comes up with whom she wishes to flirt, and then withdraw and give his place to *that* person; to be constantly on the *qui vive*, to take off the attention of any young *protégée*, who may be rather *de trop*, and even go the length of dancing with the *protégée*, if necessary; to hunt up his patroness's shawls; call up her carriage, and if required go out shooting or sailing with her husband, (as the case may be,) on the shortest notice—these and a hundred less important duties fall to the share of the gooseberry-picker; but Mr. Harvey's manner to Mrs. Harbottle, has much more of *empressement* about it than is either required or encouraged in that particular capacity."

Scarcely had her ladyship given her definition of the duties of the lady's staff officer, when a noise of bells ringing, dogs barking, horses

prancing, and wheels grinding the gravel, announced an arrival. It was Harbottle himself—who entered, followed by Lady Frances's footman, bearing a huge basket of fruit. Pines, peaches, grapes, and all the other best products of his houses.

“How d’ye do, my lady?” said Harbottle, “I have brought ye some fruit my lady—how d’ye do? Not the worse for raking—my poor wife has got a sad head-ache—I never have a head-ache, ha! ha! ha!—She is a delicate plant—I have had the best advice in the world for her every where, Paris, Rome, Naples, and Vienna—all one to me where I am—money is money, and I can always have my money’s worth—these are magnificent grapes, ar’nt they—I calculate they cost me at least five-and-twenty shillings a pound; but as I say, what does it signify?—Well, Frederick, what are you for to-day?”

“A little quiet,” said Frederick, “I have some letters to write, and I have promised more-over to call at the Parsonage.”

“Oh, oh!” said Harbottle, with a laugh that was loud and harsh enough to make the window glass vibrate, “that’s it—I know it—I saw it—

I said to Mrs. H., I smelt a rat—Emma Lovell has made a hole in Fred. Sheringham's heart—ha ! ha ! ha !”

“ Fred. Sheringham !” muttered Lady Frances.

“ She's a charming girl, and a good girl, but poor—not fifty pounds in the world, I believe, beyond the living, which, considering you have nothing yourself is a bit of a drawback.”

Lady Frances felt herself turning alternately crimson and white, to think that she had so fallen from her high estate as to hear a stranger in her own house, calling her son Fred., discussing the merits of an alliance with Miss Lovell, and commiserating his poverty as the bar to its completion.

“ I am quite sure, Mr. Harbottle,” said her ladyship, “ that a son of mine will never inconvenience the young lady by his persecutions.”

“ Oh, she likes him amazingly,” said Harbottle, these women have a sort of freemasonry of their own ; and the only difference between their craft and ours is, that they see no use in a secret, if they mayn't tell it, and so she told my wife what an agreeable man she thought Fred., and my wife told me—ha ! ha ! ha !”

“ Fred., as you call him, sir,” said her ladyship, “ is, I am sure, highly flattered by the information.”

“ And uncommon lucky in securing my wife’s friendship too,” interrupted Harbottle; “ you may rely upon it—though I dare say you know enough of such things without my telling—that a female friend will contribute more to a lover’s success in a month than all his own labour and pains in a year without her—that’s the way I got Mrs. H——”

“ I am sure Mr. Harbottle,” said Lady Frances, “ we are greatly indebted to you.”

“ *I* am, I sincerely admit,” said Frederick. “ You will find her up at lunch at the Hall,” continued Harbottle, “ and remember, faint heart never won fair lady; and for all she does seem so distant and reserved, when she does take a fancy she is a most affectionate creature—ha ! ha ! ha !”

“ Is she in the habit of taking fancies ?” said Lady Frances, who devoutly wished her familiar friend at the bottom of one of his own fish-ponds.

“ No, no, come hang it Lady Frances,” said Harbottle, “ you are too sharp upon me—what

I mean to say is, that I never in my life saw one of those quiet, silent girls—iced beauties, as Mrs. H. calls them, who when she *did* thaw was not the most—”

“My dear Mr. Harbottle,” said Frederick, “do talk of something else; my mother is in an agony at the bare supposition of my acting upon your advice.”

“Agony,” said Harbottle, “why my lady, I think it would be a nice match enough—with nothing on either side, you know, they can’t reproach one another, eh?—Ha! ha! ha!”

“Indeed, sir,” said Lady Frances, drawing herself up into a graceful attitude, “these are subjects which one does not usually discuss in this manner. I have no fear that my son with the feelings and principles which I know him to possess, will ever do any thing which will bring sorrow upon me, or discredit upon himself; we are, however, yet such perfect strangers, that the very conversation of this morning repeated, as it may be, at luncheon, does not appear to me to be quite prudent—agreeable I am quite sure it is not.”

“Don’t be angry Lady Frances,” said Har-

bottle, with as much ease and familiarity as if he had known her for twenty years. "I dare say old Lovell would think twice before he let his daughter marry a man without money. I was only joking about *that* ; but I said what I will say again, that she is a charming girl."

The conversation here took a more general turn, and the praises of Emma Lovell, which sounded, even in Harbottle's harsh voice like music to Frederick's ears, gave place to a conversation infinitely less interesting to Frederick, and infinitely more mortifying to his mother.

"I am going over," said Harbottle, "to the fifteenth and last days' sale at Macedoine Hall, where I have made a good many purchases, and I declare to you my lady I am glad the sale is so nearly over, for I know I should go on making purchases to the end of the chapter—Ha ! ha ! ha !"

"'Tis a fine place," said her ladyship ; "poor dear Lord Errington, he was an agreeable person enough."

"I dare say he was, my lady," replied Har-

bottle, "I never had the honour of his acquaintance—he and my lady cut me and mine; so I waited."

Frederick understood enough of this affair between the families, and short as his acquaintance had been with Binford, had been illuminated in this particular by his friend Harvey, who had admitted to him in a *sotto voce* conversation after dinner, that Harbottle, beyond the mere pleasure of possessing divers and sundry articles belonging to the late Lord Errington, enjoyed a still greater delight in buying things out of a house for money, into which house he never had been admitted until by a five shilling catalogue to view the "effects."

"Pray," said Lady Frances, "has Lady Errington any family?"

"Three daughters," said Harbottle, "no great beauties; they all take after their father—Ha! ha! ha!"

"Melancholy for themselves, poor dears, but very satisfactory to their parents," said Lady Frances; "and Lady Errington, who was *she*, I quite forget?"

"Upon my word I don't think I ever heard," said Harbottle. "It was the same as in my

case, I believe, the money was all on the man's side."

"And what are you going to buy to-day, sir?" said Lady Frances.

"I really don't know," replied the Squire.

"What did you buy yesterday?" said Frederick.

"Oh, I'll show you," said Harbottle, pulling out of his pocket a huge crumpled catalogue, collated and concocted by that prince of all auctioneers, Mr. George Robins;—"here is what I bought yesterday."

"Lot 387.—Two gold dragons with silver tails and amethyst eyes; with moveable heads; for burning pastiles."

"For those I gave two hundred and forty guineas—cheap at the money. His Lordship paid six hundred pounds for them at Storr and Mortimer's."

"Extraordinary bargains," said Lady Frances.

"Then," said the Squire—"Lot 594.—A gold duck (the Errington crest), with music inside, and mechanism to move it, containing four beautifully cut glass scent bottles. I got that," continued he, "for eighty-nine pounds—the old Countess of Bromsgrove sat opposite

to me and bid up to eighty-five, but I would have had it if she had gone on till midnight, eh? Ha! ha! ha!”

“It is a useful article,” said Frederick smilingly.

“That’s not it,” said Harbottle, “I did not want either the duck or the bottles; but to be beat by an old dowager countess with a jointure of not more per annum than it costs me to keep my hounds, was what I could not stand—Ha! ha! ha!”

Lady Frances shuddered again just perceptibly.

“Then my Lady,” said Harbottle, “there was lot 2538, 47th in the thirteenth day’s sale. ‘A cedar bagatelle board, silver gilt clamps and bindings, lined with purple Genoa velvet on silver tripod stand, supported by gold ducks, silver balls and ivory cues, complete.’ That was my last hit—got it home this morning. The silver balls won’t run upon the velvet, and the ivory cues split the first blow Fanny made:—but, no matter, there it is—and so I must be off for the last day—adieu my lady. Sheringham, remember, luncheon at half past one—you know your way—and as for your lady-

ship, just treat us as old friends—don't stand upon ceremony with us, you'll find us always the same, old lady—no stiffness—no finery—good day—good day.—Ha ! ha ! ha !”

And so he made his exit.

“ Ceremony with the Harbottles” thought her ladyship—“ old lady !”—“ always the same”—“ no finery”—“ mercy on me, what notions the people have ; as if money could purchase what they most stand in need of.” And after this reflection her ladyship proceeded to lecture her son upon the necessity of taking care that he neither made a fool of himself, nor was made a fool of by the Parson's daughter. She then retired to her boudoir to write manifold sheets of sentiment to divers and sundry of her noble friends, with whom still intending to make her autumnal visitations, (which she did with an archidiaconal regularity) to their various country houses she as regularly corresponded, and Frederick proceeded on the back of his pony to Binford Hall, for the express purpose of meeting the said Parson's daughter at luncheon.

CHAPTER V.

“ A murderous guilt shews not itself more soon,
Than love that would seem hid.”

SHAKSPEARE.

THE monotony of a country life, as those who have tried it must feel, is, of all things in the world the most delightful: if that can be called monotony which although each day's arrangement may be the same, presents a continued variety of minor incidents springing out of the general order of things.

We have just announced the first luncheon at Binford, at which were assembled the lady of the house, Miss Lovell, Mr. Harvey, and Captain Sheringham. It proved so agreeable, that

an engagement was made to meet on the morrow at the same hour—from that morrow and that luncheon grew another, until, for ten or twelve days consecutively, these “creatures of habit” passed their mornings together, excepting on the two Sundays, which intervened.

It was on the second Monday of this agreeable association, (for the Squire was during the day actively employed in some of those invigorating sports, which do so much honour to our countrymen,) that when the party broke up to dress for dinner (for after the luncheon came a drive; and after the return from the drive, a walk in the garden; and after *that*, the separation for the day,) Emma Lovell found herself, for the first time, too late for her father's dinner; and Mrs. Harbottle felt annoyed beyond measure, that she could not venture so far to infringe upon the authority of her lord and master, as to invite Sheringham to join their family party.

A pony phaeton was ready to take Miss Lovell home, but strange to say, although she was late—she, the distant, timid, and retiring Emma, declared a preference for walking; and in reply to her fair friend's most reasonable statement

as to the greater expedition of the carriage, declared that as she *was* too late for papa, it could not be helped, and as he *must* have dined long before, a few minutes one way or the other, *could* make no difference. Frederick's arm was therefore accepted, and Mrs. Harbottle with Charles Harvey for *her* supporter having *chaperoned* Emma to the lodges, the gallant son of Neptune, (and of Lady Frances Sheringham,) escorted her through the quiet village of Binford to the Parsonage; where he safely deposited his divinity at the door of the divine.

“ I think,” said Mrs. Harbottle as they were walking homewards, to Charles, with whom she had grown into a habit of confidence; “ our new neighbour and our fair friend seem to sympathize amazingly.”

“ So do I,” said Harvey, “ how animated she has grown—those mild blue eyes upon which a man fancied he might look with impunity, are now lighted up into a fire and brilliancy hitherto imperceptible. I suppose, like the “ snow on Jura's steep,” of which Moore so sweetly sings, the ray *has* beamed, whose touch is fire; and your iced beauty is about to melt.”

“Not into tears, I hope,” said Mrs. Harbottle?—“I know no human being for whom I have a higher regard than I have for Emma Lovell—and fervently do I hope and pray that she will think, before she concludes on such a step as marriage. A momentary decision involves the happiness or misery of a whole existence. *He* seems amiable, high spirited, and kind hearted; extremely well-mannered, very agreeable, and generally accomplished; but it requires time and experience to study the character of the man who for ever and aye, is to have the controul, the guidance, and devotion of one’s whole life and conduct, and with whom at all times and all seasons, and under all circumstances a woman is to be linked.”

“Why, Fanny,” said Charles Harvey, (who sometimes went the length of calling her by her Christian name,) “you have all on a sudden turned lecturer; and as lecturers often do, preach what you do not practice—how long did you know Harbottle before you married *him*!”

“Charles, Charles,” said Mrs. Harbottle, pressing the arm she leant upon, as if to check the turn the conversation was taking, “do not quote *my* case as an example for any body else.

I have every reason to be happy with my husband—wealth, and all indulgences that he can afford me, are at my command—but our marriage was one which, God forbid I ever should offer as a precedent for the guidance of others. He was rich, and appeared good humoured and lively, and was a great favourite with my father. I was a child when we married, and dutifully obeyed that father's command. I made *his* happiness, and —”

“ Well,” said Charles, “ and —”

“—Secured my own,” continued she, after a pause. “ I ought to be happy, I *am* happy—but—don't misunderstand me—it is a kind of happiness which would not gratify the better regulated mind of Emma Lovell, superior as she is to *me* in every thing.—All I desire is within my reach, nothing that I express a wish for, is denied me, but as you, who live with us so much, must see and feel, there *are* times when the peculiarities of *His* temper and character create pain, and sorrow, and anxiety for me ; but he intends well and kindly, and—what I mean—and I am sure I can scarcely tell how we have been led into this strain of conversation—I—that is—in short—to Emma Lovell, such a match

would be misery. She shrinks from the boisterous mirth in which *he* delights; she is unambitious, and would, I am sure, without talking romance, prefer a cottage, with the man she could really love and esteem, to a palace with a being like—like—I mean a being of an uncertain character, whose pursuits were not congenial with her own, and whose temper, influenced by habit, was not to be depended upon.—In short, I think—I think that—Sheringham appears to have made such an impression upon her, that if you—are anxious—not—to lose—her, you had—better be on the alert.”

“I!” said Harvey, “I—I—would not—my—” He said no more;—but he felt that he would have given the world to speak: his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, his cheek flushed, and his heart beat, and they walked on; and Fanny, not seeking to break the silence, kept her eyes upon the ground, and, with an air of gaiety which a starting tear belied, struck up the grass with her parasol, as they passed along, by way of seeming thoughtless.

The first dinner bell sounded as they reached

the door of the house—but the silence remained unbroken. Fanny had surely disclosed more of herself and her feelings, indescribing the feelings of her friend, than she had ever disclosed before to Harvey, or even intended to disclose then. He, on the other hand, had declared in brief, but striking terms, his total indifference towards Emma Lovell, with a devoted affection for whom, Harbottle, was fond of charging him.

They walked forwards to the Hall door, still without speaking; and when they arrived there, it seemed as if their silence had been so long protracted, that any effort to get up a new conversation would be vain. They reached the steps—and having in a hurried manner withdrawn her arm from that of Charles, Mrs. Harbottle ran hastily into the house, without uttering a syllable, or even so much as looking at her companion.

Harvey went to his room, to dress for dinner; but whether on his head or his feet, was to him a matter of uncertainty; he felt as if he were in a dream, or had just awakened from one. Little had been said in his walk with Mrs. Harbottle,—but never was the eloquence of silence more powerful;—yet what *had* happened? After all,

she had spoken only interestedly for others—she had admitted the kindness and affection of her husband; in fact, she had expressed nothing but an anxious desire that George should not refer to *her*, as an example for other girls to follow, in their decisions upon matrimony.

Fanny's sensations were far different from Harvey's. With a heart and mind full of the highest principle and imbued with the strongest feelings of the purest honour, she felt conscious that in the confidence of friendship which she entertained for him, she had let slip, for the first time in her life, to man, the secret, that with all "appliances and means to boot," her happiness was not complete—that in her husband she vainly sought for the companion and friend—and that, however strongly bound by religion and duty to "love, honour, and obey" him, she hopelessly, yet constantly, endeavoured to attach him to herself by gentler ties than those which duty prescribes, and make him love her, for qualities which she possessed, and of which, without vanity, she knew the value, but which every day's experience convinced her, *he* could not justly appreciate.

It is true that Emma Lovell possessed this se-

cret of her heart; for she was in her entire confidence; and to Emma Lovell she had often urged the merits of Charles Harvey, whose mind, and temper, and disposition, and character, she used constantly to assure her, were formed to make *her* happy; and in the frequent repetition of his praise, she was sincere and disinterested beyond suspicion: while Harvey, on the other hand, fascinated by the conversation and society of Mrs. Harbottle, saw in her, only the charming companion and the amiable friend, without a thought or wish which could unpleasantly interfere with the recollection that she was the wife of his kind yet boisterous host, whose unbounded hospitality he constantly eulogized, and whose honour he would at any hour have vindicated with his life.

Up to the period of the conversation just recorded, these had been his sentiments, these his opinions; but one of the moments which decide the fate of woman, and man too, had arrived, and his thoughts took a new turn. The mirror of his mind no longer reflected Harbottle as the thoughtless, rattling, open-hearted Squire; he saw him the very contrast of tender-

ness and gentleness; he beheld him harsh, coarse, vain of his wealth, and violent in his temper; his accomplishments he reduced to two—hard drinking and hard riding: on these he piqued himself, and by alternating his adoption of them, either drank till he grew, first peevish and then passionate, or rode till he was fatigued to death, and slept away the evening on one of his crimson velvet sofas, the *beau-ideal* of a tired post-boy. Add to this, that the leading characteristics of his mind, beyond the vanity of riches, were a sweeping suspicion of female virtue, and a splendid contempt for female intellect, and Harvey could no longer hesitate in deciding that he had all along been mistaken, and that Fanny must be, and indeed was—a miserable woman.

And so she was—but rendered less miserable by the endurance of the ills which actually surrounded her, than by her indiscreet confession of them to Charles. Her manner while dressing, was so wild, and her language so incoherent, that her maid endeavoured to persuade her not to go down to dinner; for well trained *soubrettes* have a vast dread of those incoherencies in language which temporary excitement sometimes

produces ; inasmuch as they know that ladies occasionally give grounds for great suspicion or alarm, by uttering words which in fact have no meaning, but which, coupled with passing events, by interested people, may really place them in very awkward situations. Mrs. Harbottle, however, struggled with her feelings, and came into the drawing-room before dinner looking as lovely and as calm as if nothing beyond the ordinary events of the day had occurred.

Harvey's embarrassment was more visible : unpractised in the art of lady-killing, and wholly unskilled in the hypocrisy so essential to support the double character which he seemed most involuntarily destined to play, he felt a necessity for restraint which he had never experienced in that house before. Fanny had given him her confidence ; she had trusted more to *him* than she had ever yet trusted to man. He felt that if he sat down by her, as he was wont to do, and joked with her upon the common occurrences of the day, she might think him either devoid of sympathy in her unhappiness, or presuming upon the favour she had unquestionably shewn him : while, if he

assumed a colder and more distant manner, she might fancy him ungrateful for her confidence, or, as the friend of her husband, outraged by the candour of her negative admissions.

Mrs. Harbottle saw his difficulty, and did not suffer him for a moment to hesitate as to the course he was to pursue with regard to her. She spoke to him as if nothing had been said, appeared to have forgotten all that had passed, and took upon herself to detail the proceedings of the morning to the Squire, who brought home to dine with him, two of his favourite neighbours, much in the habit of bowing the knee at his shrine, and remaining with him till two or three o'clock in the morning, in the enjoyment of what are called the pleasures of conviviality.—So far all went well.

“Master Charles,” said the Squire, after Mrs. Harbottle had retired from the dinner table, “the wine is with *you*; why you seem squeamish to-day—drink, man—drink; that’s my own importation, stands me in twelve and sixpence a bottle, but what does that matter—what’s money made for, as I say, but to circulate? Come, fill a bumper. Gad, I suspect

he's in love, gentlemen—upset by a pair of blue eyes. I know the secret : our Parson's daughter here, has picked up a London lover, who is going to snap her up from Charles, and he is down-hearted about it. Is not that it, Charles ? Ha ! ha ! ha !”

To describe the horror which this appeal excited in poor Charles, whose heart was bursting—who saw the bumper proffered by the hand of his hospitable, hard-headed host, conscious as he was of the real cause of his low spirits—is impossible. He tried to smile, but the effort was vain ; and he swallowed the wine, tasteless to his palate, by an almost convulsive effort.

“Poor fellow !” said Harbottle, “I pity you with all my heart ; I hate crossings in love : of course, with *my* fortune, I knew none of them—plenty of girls ready to jump at *me*, and I took my choice, and married Fanny, because I liked *her*, and because the liking was mutual ; and so we had no weepings and no willows, but all mirth and merriment. She cried a bit, I recollect, at starting, but the sun soon shone, and we have been as happy as the day is long, ever since. Ha ! ha ! ha !”

The turn the conversation had taken was painfully distressing to Charles, who sat listening to the praises of Fanny, and the often reiterated eulogies on her beauty, and the still oftener repeated declarations of her goodness, in a state of fever, from which he was only relieved by the starting of a new subject, and a proposition, by the Squire, to make up a fishing party for the morning.

“I think,” said the Squire, “I can promise you a southerly wind; if I am wrong—for money won’t buy a wind, except in Lapland—we must put up with a westerly one; and, if it happens to be cloudy, I care little, for my part, from what quarter it blows. But then we must be stirring early. Charles, you will be in your glory. Mr. Harvey is a dab at killing trout; drake-fly, wasp-fly, or stone-fly, all one to him. I never saw a fellow handle a rod, or land a fish more knowingly.”

On any previous day to this, Harvey’s eyes would have glistened with pleasure at the anticipation of the promised sport; in one instant would he have responded to the call of his host, and have entered into all the arcana of the art, with an animation and precision most gratifying

to the shades of Messrs. Walton and Cotton ; but to-night, the proposition (tasteless as the prospect of the diversion itself, had become), involved a variety of doubts and uncertainties. He was engaged to the repetition of that day's luncheon on the morrow—his absence would perhaps annoy Mrs. Harbottle—his promise had been given. Why, then, when Harbottle, perceiving his hesitation, inquired if he had any engagement to prevent his joining them—why did he not at once say that he *was* engaged to the luncheon and subsequent drive with his wife, Emma Lovell, and George Sheringham ?

It was the consciousness—it was the self-accusation—it was the combination, in his own disturbed mind, of the simplest and most innocent of arrangements with other and more important events, which stopped his mouth. For the first time in his life, he felt a restraint upon his tongue when he attempted to speak the plain truth ; and for fear of exciting a suspicion, when there was in fact nothing to suspect, he declared himself free from all engagements, and ready to attend them.

“ Well said, Charles,” cried the Squire.—
“ Pass the wine, gentlemen. We'll send for

Hallett, and tell him to get the tackle in order, and have the boat ready to take us to Swimmer's Ford, not later than five o'clock—earlier if you please. We'll send down breakfast to the Ford, and enjoy ourselves like aldermen.—Charles, go like a good fellow into the drawing room, and tell Fanny our scheme, and see if she has any objection to it. I think it is always amiable to ask, though I *do* follow my own vagary afterwards—ha! ha! ha!—and I say, Charles, tell her we are coming to coffee forthwith."

Fifty times had Charles been sent on similar embassies, and had Fanny been his sister, he could not have more fraternally nor yet more affectionately fulfilled his mission. To-night, he felt as if there were something wrong, something improper, something guilty in it. He went, but hesitatingly, and when he reached the drawing-room, instead of feeling disappointed at Fanny's absence, it was the greatest relief to him to find, that (being, as one of the servants said, unwell) she had already retired to rest.

But then he must labour under the imputa-

tion of levity and heartlessness till the next day's dinner time. He had broken his engagement with Mrs. Harbottle, to join her husband in a sport, which, however agreeable, detached him entirely from the party which he himself had been most active in making up. This he could not endure. What could he do to escape the suspicion of such fickleness?—Of course beg Harbottle to explain to his wife his anxious wish that he should go with him, and make his excuse, (if, considering the terms on which they had so long lived, excuse were necessary) for not joining them at luncheon.

That he could not do. He was on the point of joining in one of the “uncongenial pursuits” of her husband, to which she had alluded, if not by words, at least by implication, and he could not make *him* the medium of communication to announce this change in his resolution; a change effected in fact for *her* sake, or rather for fear of mentioning the “once familiar word” which the recollection of the unlooked-for conversation of the morning had “forbidden him to speak.”

Oh, mischief, mischief, how easily art thou generated! What was his resource? Whilst

he was doubting—hesitating—trembling—aye, trembling—an inkstand caught his sight—paper, pens, wax, all the implements were there—a note to Fanny—a few words would explain all. How *could* he endure the suspicion which he knew must attach to him, of cold-heartedness, or something worse?—In less than five minutes a note was written, folded, sealed;—but how to be delivered—this was his doubt. He opened the drawing-room door, and in the lobby, passing onwards to her mistress's room, he met Mrs. Devon, Mrs. Harbottle's maid. The coincidence was strange, but accidental; here were the means direct.

“Devon,” said Charles, feeling himself as pale as death, “give *that* to your mistress.”

“Yes, sir,” said Devon, and passed on.

It was done—the rubicon was passed—there was nothing in the note that Harbottle and a jury of husbands might not have read, as we may presently see, but it *was* a note—the first he had ever found it necessary to write, the first *that* maid had ever been asked to carry.

He returned to the dining-room, was rallied by his host upon his long *tête-à-tête* with his

wife, announced her retirement, and swallowed more wine ; to wine succeeded coffee, to coffee liqueur, to liqueur, broiled bones ; to those, all sorts of potations, and at half-past one the party separated for *the night*, to meet and begin the day at half-past four.

CHAPTER VI.

“ I would have some confidence with you,
That decerns you nearly.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“ I SHOULD like to know,” said Mrs. Devon, as she sat at breakfast with the house-steward, the gentlemen out of livery, the groom of the chambers, and other privileged persons of the household, “ the meaning of your master’s sending that note last night to my lady.” She addressed herself to Harvey’s *valet*.

“ What does it signify, Mrs. Devon ?” replied Evans. “ I suppose my master had something to say to her, or he would not have sent it ; besides, I should have thought you had too

much *tact*, as we call it, to talk about such things."

"Tact! Mr. Evans," said Mrs. Devon, "I like *that* vastly. When there is reason to be cautious, I believe nobody has more tact than I; but every body knows what is expected of them when they come to a place. When I lived with Lady Saxmundham, as charming a lady as ever drew breath, if she sent for me even, I no more dared go into the room without knocking, than I dared fly, especially during the hours of morning calls; and all the time that Sir Harry Framlingham used to come there, day after day, before they were found out, I was always ready at the bottom of the back staircase, to take any letter he might have to leave; and I'm sure when I was examined on the trial, nobody who knew so much, could have said so little as I did. —I like your talking of tact to *me*!"

"Well," said Mr. Hollis, the house-steward, "I don't like to hear of these things going on. I have often thought Evans's master rather too much all-in-all in our family. I have lived with my master ever since he was a boy; I know his good nature, I know his violence of temper, and I believe when he is

in a passion, nothing but blood would quench it; and so for a double reason I dislike all this conversation, and I hope we shall have no more of it here. My mistress is, I dare say, a very nice lady, and in my opinion—”

“Too good for this world, Mr. Hollis,” interrupted Evans; “for if she had only managed Mrs. Devon as Lady Saxmundham did, we should not have heard this story of the letter, which I must say, Mrs. Devon might as well have not told.”

“I don’t know that I *should* have noticed it, as it is,” said Mrs. Devon, somewhat angry, “only that no confidence is placed in me; trust me, and you might as well try to get a secret out of an oyster. But if I find out things of my own head, I have a right to do as I please; and what made me think of it the more, was the flurry my lady was in before dinner. I’m sure I never saw her so in my life, and —”

Here the sudden ringing of Mrs. Harbottle’s bell put an end to the conversation.

From this brief extract, the reader may in some degree comprehend the extent of mischief innocently done by the agitated, wretched Harvey, who had inadvertently, and with no ill

meaning, sown the seeds of dissension in that family, the fruits of which were not to be housed even in his lifetime.

But if the billet, innocent as it was, which he wrote, had created a sensation amongst the servants, what had been its effect upon Fanny! The moment she saw Devon enter the room with a note, her worst fears were excited, and in the sequel, her worst anticipations realized. Not only did its appearance convince her, that her incautious admissions of the morning had emboldened Charles to adopt a mode of addressing her which he had never before attempted; not only did she see in this change of circumstances a change of feeling on his part towards her, but she saw, what is was clear he had entirely overlooked, that the novel, and it may be added, suspicious mode of communication which he had adopted, through the medium of her maid, (whose connivance in her whole lifetime she had never sought, and whose confidence she had never made,) could not fail to expose her to the observation of the whole *clique* of upper servants.

These were the minor considerations which perplexed her at the moment, but they sank

into nothing when she read the following lines, written evidently in haste and trepidation:—

“ I have been invited to join a fishing party with *him*, to-morrow. I am, as you know, engaged to you, with Emma, and Capt. Sheringham, at luncheon. I felt it was better to accept the invitation. We start at four to-morrow morning—we shall meet at dinner. I could not go without explaining why I did so, and when I came to the drawing room, you were gone.

“ Ever yours,

“ C. H.”

The worst she feared had come to pass. One day before, what would it have signified whether he broke an engagement with the wife to accept an engagement with the husband? They lived on the most intimate terms—they were as one family—he had now separated the community of interests between them.—Why?—because *she* had set him the example in the morning.

Her first impulse was to explain the whole affair to Harbottle when he should come from supper; but at that period of the evening, or rather morning, he was usually ill-calculated

to comprehend clearly the points of any detail submitted to him; and she felt sure that the lurking dæmon, jealousy, which never yet had shewn itself on account of Harvey, would be roused into fury, if in the confusion of his ideas he jumbled the note written by Charles and sent clandestinely to his wife, by her maid, with the recollection of the intimacy in which they all lived. Had it been morning she would have made the matter a laughing one—as it was, silence was her only resource; but if any thing had been wanting to add to the pang she already felt, it was the too certain assurance that the character of Harvey's affection for her—for she was conscious of his affection—was totally changed in the course of the last twelve hours.

On her own course she was resolved.

The morning dawned clear and fine, and scarcely had the clock proclaimed the hour of four, when Harbottle, who had purchased a sound sleep of three hours (as he professed to purchase every thing else), with wine and other libations in which he had indulged, rose quietly and proceeded to dress for the promised sport; leaving the lovely Fanny in a sweet slumber,

as he imagined. But, no ; sleep had been a stranger to her eyes that night, and when she came down to her solitary breakfast, she felt wretched—unrefreshed—unhappy.

When Emma Lovell arrived at the Hall, which was before the appearance of Captain Sheringham, Fanny, who kept no secrets from *her*, and who looked to her as the only consolation she possessed in the world, communicated the whole of the circumstances which had occurred the day before, and felt comparatively happy when she had thus unburthened her mind to her friend, and ascertained not only that the resolution, to which she had come, met with Emma's approbation, but that she even consented to do all in her power to carry it into effect.

What that resolution was, time will shew.

While these affairs were in progress at Binford Hall, things were not altogether tranquil at Dale Cottage ; Lady Frances began to think, (short as the period was that had yet elapsed), that the attentions of her son to somebody, whether Mrs. Harbottle or Miss Lovell (she had scarcely made up her mind which), were growing too particular ; the repeated luncheons, the

frequent drives, and all the other incidents of each succeeding day considerably annoyed her, and she resolved, as a reasonable mother had a right to do, at all events to call on Mrs. Harbottle somewhere about the hour of luncheon on that very morning, in order to see, as her ladyship said, "how the land lay."

Her opportune arrival just as they were sitting down to that sociable meal, (for meal, a Binford luncheon decidedly was,) was by no means disagreeable to the lady of the house, although Frederick, who was most happily *planté* next the fascinating Emma, could, if truth were to be spoken at all times, have dispensed with the presence of his excellent and right honourable parent. Mrs. Harbottle felt, in *her* state of mind, a relief from society, and although little inclined to join in conversation, which required much care or attention, the current of words which flowed from the vermilion lips of Lady Frances, was so perpetual and incessant, that to see and listen, was all that was required of her companions. Upon the present occasion it saved Fanny a world of trouble, and while she was attending to her ladyship's anecdotes and historiettes of good society, Frederick and

Emma found the most favourable opportunity of doing that, which lovers invariably and incessantly do—talk about themselves.

Mrs. Harbottle carried her politeness so far as to invite Lady Frances to accompany them in their drive, begging her, if she would waive ceremony, subsequently, to stop and dine with them; and, as his mother was to be of the party, she felt she could take the liberty without a special reference to her lord and master, of inviting Captain Sheringham to remain.

In pursuance of her plan of watching her son and Miss Lovell, rather than in the expectation of an agreeable day, Lady Frances accepted the invitation; and an account having been given of the cause of Harvey's absence, the party proceeded to put into execution the different parts of the programme as settled the previous afternoon. How differently, however, the day passed off from that which preceded it!—Fanny's thoughts were occupied with her own position, and Emma, conscious from Lady Frances's manner, not only of the opinion she entertained of her, but of the suspicion which existed in her mind, as to her having *a design*

upon her son, was equally stiffened into the most uncomfortable state of unsociability.

“ This is neighbourly, my lady,” said Harbottle, when he came home and found Lady Frances seated amongst the family party ready for dinner ; “ I like this—I dare say, in time, when the autumn rains have taken some more of the London starch out of you, we shall get on uncommonly well together. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ”

“ In the autumn,” said Lady Frances, “ I shall, I am sorry to say, not be here. I go to my brother Pevensey’s, at Grimsbury, for a month, and thence on a tour to different houses until Christmas, which I always keep at his.”

“ And do *you* leave us too, Frederick,” said Harbottle to Sheringham.

“ Not so methodically,” replied the Captain, “ it depends a good deal upon shooting.”

“ If that’s all,” said Harbottle, “ you need not leave my lands—I have the best covers, better preserved than any commoner’s alive—the largest birds, and the greatest number, for the size of the property, in England ; I have spared no expense, no pains, no cost, no trouble, to secure that advantage.”

“ I am afraid I must not leave George here,” said Lady Frances, “ he will get so much attached to you all, that I shall have no chance for a share of his affection.”

“ I am sure,” said Mrs. Harbottle, “ we will take the greatest care of Captain Sheringham.”

“ Lay him up in lavender till your ladyship comes back,” said the Squire, “ my wife is a capital hand at petting a favourite—is not she, Harvey? Ha! ha! ha!”

A more disagreeable reference under the circumstances could not have been well made; Harvey made a sort of unintelligible noise, and affected to look pleased. Mrs. Harbottle felt her heart beat, and was forced to hold her breath; and Emma Lovell scarcely venturing to look up, took a hasty glance, under her eyelids, at the state of the party.

“ I am in hopes,” said her ladyship, “ that Frederick may get a ship.”

“ I used to be very anxious upon that point myself,” said Sheringham, “ but somehow my longing for employment, at least in peace time, has considerably abated of late.”

Another pause ensued.

“Harvey,” said Harbottle, “are you tired, you are as dull as a Dutchman.”

“I am completely knocked up,” said Harvey.

“Disappointed at your ill-success with the trout, I take it,” said Harbottle; “whether Fanny sympathizes with you I cannot tell; but she, and even Emma, seem to me to be in doleful dumps about something, eh? Ha! ha! ha!”

“My dear Mr. Harbottle,” said Lady Frances, “people cannot always command their spirits; besides, the surest way of keeping them down is noticing the depression; we have had a long drive, and a long walk to day.”

Fanny said nothing in her defence, and Emma kept equally silent. It was in fact one of those parties in which each person was occupied with his own thoughts, and in which, every body was acting his own particular part. Harbottle was the only straight-forward, plane-sailing, member of the community; Fanny was wretched; so was Harvey, for he saw what she was suffering. She, conceiving he did so, increased her own misery by the apprehension that he would attribute her low spirits to a cause whence they did not spring, and sat in agonizing

anxiety, waiting the arrival of the moment when he was to be undeceived.

Upon Harvey, sick at heart, and now tremblingly alive to the horrors of his situation, the truth had burst——without a thought or consideration of consequences, he had yielded himself to the fascinations of a lovely woman, whose unaffected manners and generous kindness had, in the course of a long and intimate acquaintance, bound him heart and soul to her ; while unconscious of the character his passion was assuming, he had gone on fancying that what he felt was friendship pure and unalloyed. Now that his eyes were opened, and he found that he not only loved, but that Fanny, as he fancied, reciprocated that love, he became indifferent to every thing else, and unconscious of every thing that was passing around him. To think, too, that he, the cherished friend of Harbottle—his favourite companion—pressed to become an inmate in his house—honoured, caressed, and confided in—that *he* should be the viper in his bosom—he the guilty wretch to work his sorrow and, perhaps, his shame. These were the dreads and sorrows of the high-minded, honourable Harvey—and yet could he abandon *her*—a thought be-

yond endurance. Could he at once break all the links which bound him to her—quit the scene of his happiness, and tear himself from the only being on earth in whose society he delighted. It was, indeed, a struggle.

All this was passing in his mind during the early part of the evening, and it was not therefore to be expected that he should be a very agreeable member of the Binford coterie.

Emma Lovell's intellectual powers were so much concealed under an appearance, natural to her, of diffidence, and as I have already said, to strangers, of coldness, that Lady Frances, with all her knowledge of the world, scarcely thought it worth while to *finesse* with her; so that the Parson's daughter, perfectly alive to the object of her ladyship's visit, and aware that at the moment her ladyship was talking glibly of a gay and fashionable world, to *her* unknown, she was attentively watching the effect which the detail of its pleasures produced upon her young mind, leading her at the same time, by no very refined process, to express her opinions upon the advantages derivable from aristocratic connections and the introduction to society, which such connections would, probably afford

to a young woman of small means and smaller pretensions, put herself upon an equality with her ladyship, by playing a game too; because, innocent as she was, and unconscious as she appeared to be, Emma not only saw that her ladyship's conversation had in it a design, but discovered the particular design which her ladyship vainly flattered herself she had most entirely concealed; and thus, between caution on the one hand with her ladyship, and a recollection that she had in the course of the evening an arduous duty to perform with respect to somebody else, Miss Lovell was as little agreeable as it was possible for her to be.

Sheringham, who knew every sinuosity of his mother's mind, was equally alive to the object of her visit and the general tone of her conversation—but not willing to commit himself and risk an interdiction, perhaps, of future visits to the Hall, (which he would have felt it his duty to obey, not only from the impulse of of filial obedience, but because over and above that, her ladyship's property was entirely at her own disposal) turned his little *galantries* upon Mrs. Harbottle, who pleased in the midst of her sorrow to be employed in conversation,

encouraged in his observations and remarks, so that Harbottle and Harvey, finding themselves *basketted*, (as the phrase goes,) retired to the adjoining room, and began a rubber at billiards.

Lady Frances had then an opportunity of engaging Emma in a *tête-à-tête* on one sofa, while Sheringham and Fanny were enjoying the scene from another; for if Emma were Fanny's confidant upon some occasions, it is but fair to believe that Fanny officiated in the same capacity for Emma upon others; so that Mrs. Harbottle readily entered into the little conspiracy against Lady Frances with her son, and played off an innocent stratagem against her well-digested designs.

They were shortly interrupted by the return of the billiard players.

"Why, Fanny," said Harbottle, "what is the matter with Harvey? does any body know? can't make a hazard—missed the commonest balls; and has lost two love games."

"Upon my honour," said Harvey, "I cannot account for it; I believe the glare of the water, the early rising, and all the other things that have happened to me to day, have dazzled

my eyes. I cannot play, and that's the truth."

"Come, my lady," said Harbottle, "will you play a game at billiards?—capital table—full sized—Thurston's—best he ever made—eh—paid him ten pounds extra for the cushions—ha! ha! ha!—come."

"I never played billiards," said her ladyship, "I will go and see you play."

"Come Sheringham," said Harbottle, "come and play. I like billiards, my lady, it sounds such a pleasant game, all kisses and misses—eh—ha! ha! ha!"

A faint smile played on her ladyship's vermillioned lips.

"With all my heart," said the Captain;—and all the party adjourned to the billiard-room except Harvey, who remained standing with his back to the fire-place, looking more dead than alive, and Emma Lovell, who lingered in the drawing-room, as if she were looking for something which she had not lost.

"What *has* happened to you?" said Emma, speaking to Harvey. "You are looking wretchedly ill?"

"I *am* ill," said Harvey. "I'll go to my

room—sleep, I know, I shall not—but I am only a bore here.”

“Try the air of the conservatory,” said Emma; “come,”—he hesitated—“I have something to say to you.”—He followed her.

The drawing-rooms opened into this conservatory; the lamps and candles within the apartments afforded a subdued yet agreeable light along the whole length of the building, darkening, of course, towards the further end—a charming light for lovers—and midway between the entrance and the termination of the conservatory, was a fountain which played incessantly, and made a rippling plashy noise, the sound of which gave an idea of freshness in a sultry evening, and at the same time rendered the conversation which might be carried on, in its vicinity sufficiently indistinct to baffle designing listeners.

Along this dimly-lighted avenue, formed by the loveliest and most fragrant—and of course in Harbottle's house most expensive—exotics, Emma Lovell proceeded with the astonished Harvey, and they had reached the fountain before she could muster courage to speak to him.—At length she broke silence.

“ I told you,” said Emma, “ that I had something to say to you. I have undertaken to say it—I have promised, and, therefore, will fulfil my promise—but I fear that you will think it most extraordinary in me, to make such a communication to you ; indeed, I am conscious, I will not say of its impropriety, but of what must appear its indelicacy ; yet when I tell you that there seemed to be no other course left, and that I will shrink from nothing in the way of friendship, I do think you will forgive me.”

“ What can you mean, Emma ?” said Harvey.

“ You have made Fanny miserable, Charles,” —said Emma, looking round as if she feared being overheard, or dreaded some watching witness hid amongst the plants.

“ I !” said Charles. “ How ? how ?”

“ By writing a note to her last night, and sending it by her maid.—Listen.—I know all that has happened : your conversation with her after you left us yesterday afternoon. She has told me all ; and she feels that if she had not said something which you must have misunderstood or misconstrued, you would not have taken a step which, besides all its other ills and

miseries has exposed her to the remarks of her maid, and the observation of all the establishment."

"My only reason for writing," said Harvey, "was——"

"I know—I know," said Emma; "or rather I do not wish to know.—I want to impress upon your mind, for the sake of relieving our dear Fanny, that what she said with regard to the unsuitableness of marriages did not refer to her own position.

Here a shadow flitted across the light reflected on the pavement; Emma turned round and saw Fanny herself, who, having ascertained that her friend was engaged in her affair, returned to the billiard-room to keep Lady Frances interested in the game.

"That she is happy, rely upon it—she will continue so, but you must be a party to that continuance."

"I?" said Charles.

"Yes, *you*," replied Miss Lovell. "Fanny would have spoken to you herself, but she felt unequal to the task. I have, as you see, undertaken it; her sense of delicacy would neither permit her to make the suggestion to you, nor

did she feel at ease until she had, to avoid all appearance of deception or secrecy, imparted all the circumstances to me."

"Tell me," said Harvey, "in what way I may be instrumental to the restoration of her peace of mind, and her wishes to me shall be commands."

"First you must let me tell you her motives for asking this sacrifice," said Emma. "She feels, however much you may have misinterpreted her meaning, that she has lowered herself in your eyes."

"Good heavens !"

"Stay, Charles, stay—those are her feelings. She believes that she never again can meet and associate with you as she has hitherto done. We women are the best judges upon points like these. Do not bid me search too deeply for the causes of her decision—such *is* her feeling, Charles. If, therefore, you remain the constant inmate of this house, as you have hitherto been, think what a life of restraint—of duplicity she must ever after live.

"Oh, Emma," said Harvey, "why—why is this necessary? I have said—I have done nothing to forfeit her good opinion. I have done

nothing to forfeit the friendship and affection of her husband. Why should she feel——”

“*Why*—why ask me that?” said Emma. “That you are honourable and high-minded, I know; but you have betrayed a feeling which renders your continued residence here wretchedness to *her*, and, as I am certain, wretchedness to yourself. You are surprised to hear me speak in this new character, Charles. The cause makes me eloquent, and although I am convinced I need do no more than throw myself upon your honour and generosity, in this case, I would, were it necessary, appeal to you in the name of God, to leave her.”

“Emma,” said Charles, “you will break my heart: am I to give up the society of her whom of all others is dearest to me.”

“Hush, Charles, hush!” said Emma; “consider a moment how you are talking; reflect for an instant, and you will see that all I have said to urge your departure from this house is faint compared with the last few words you yourself have uttered——”

“But as a friend,” interrupted Harvey.

“I did not mean,” said Emma, “to have argued this part of the subject at all; I am

not competent, and if I were, it would not be fit I should. My communication is merely this; Fanny feels—why I cannot now recapitulate—that her peace of mind depends upon your—not abandoning the house or her acquaintance altogether—but upon your varying the scene of your existence, and for the present leaving Binford. That is the extent of my communication. We have been led into the discussion of other points unintentionally. I have expressed her wishes, which you have said you should consider as commands. We shall now see how you will act; but in conclusion of what I had to say, I am to add from *her*, that although she feels this sacrifice necessary to her comfort, and even respectability, she asks it with pain and sorrow, and that in parting from you, she does so with unaltered esteem and regard, and with the wish that every happiness on earth may attend you.”

“Is it possible,” said Harvey; “is it possible that I——”

“Hush, hush,” said Emma, “they are here. Walk on. I feel half guilty myself. *I* was asked to make a sacrifice—I did not hesitate.”—

“Well, upon my word, Miss Lovell,” cried

Harbottle, "why we have lost you and your sighing swain.—What have you done with him, Harvey, eh—where have you got to—why Harvey?"——

And so he continued calling, and marching along the conservatory, followed by Sheringham (who was in fact miserable at the long disappearance of the missing pair), Lady Frances and Mrs. Harbottle bringing up the rear. There they might have walked and long have searched, and yet in vain, for neither Harvey nor his exemplary monitress felt equal to encountering the boisterous mirth of their vivacious host, and having walked rapidly along in advance, they left the conservatory by the door at the other end of it, and passed on to the terrace walk, where Harvey having fervently pressed Emma's hand, rushed from her towards another door of the house, while she, proceeding leisurely, in order to collect her flurried spirits, entered the billiard-room by one of the windows which opened on to the lawn, and when the hunting party returned to the drawing-room, was found ensconced in the corner of a sofa assiduously reading a novel; a pursuit in which she might have obtained considerable credit, if Harbottle, who

was as quick as his neighbours at what he called "finding things out," had not observed that she was holding the volume upon which she was so attentively occupied, upside down.

This discovery, added to her long conversation with Harvey, and his subsequent disappearance, created great apparent merriment amongst all the party, and they laughed, as Scrub says in the play, "most consumedly." Harbottle, because he really enjoyed it and always laughed, Lady Frances, because she was convinced that Miss Lovell's *tête-à-tête* with Charles Harvey must entirely satisfy her dear George Augustus Frederick of the absurdity of thinking of her any longer, and Mrs. Harbottle, because her heart was breaking, and that nothing but a violent display of affected mirth could conceal its real anguish.

Harbottle sent to make inquiries after Harvey, and word was brought that he had retired to rest; and then Emma had again to endure all the rallying of having ill-treated, and rejected him; and all the reproachful and even fierce looks of the gallant sea-captain, who took every opportunity while his mother's watch "was slack," to telegraph his beautiful

prize with signal activity ; while she, having deliberately turned her book the right way, proceeded with immovable serenity to continue reading, or seeming to read, until the accustomed trays, and eatables, and drinkables made their appearance.

For a merry, wealthy, happy party, never, perhaps, did there separate for the night, a more agitated, worried, miserable collection of people, than the then present company, save and except always the Master of the House.

CHAPTER VII.

“ This, this has thrown a serpent to my heart,
While it o’erflowed with tenderness, with joy,
With all the sweetness of exulting love ;
Now, nought but gall is there and burning poison.”

THOMPSON.

It cannot fail to strike the reader that simple, and just, and honourable as were the events of this curious evening, the appearance of affairs in general was not only extremely suspicious, but well calculated to excite various contending feelings in most of the assembled company ; all of which feelings, however, as it turned out, were perfectly unfounded in reason or reality.

Lady Frances went home satisfied that there was no danger to be apprehended from the eagerness of the Parson’s daughter to ensnare her

son, and equally assured that his advances towards the wife of the Squire were not more likely to be well received. She, adept as she was in all the tracasseries of flirtation, and the economy of conservatories, had made up her mind that something decisive had been done that night in the case of Emma and Harvey; and although she inclined to believe that he had proposed and been rejected, still the coldness which seemed to exist between Emma and her son, during the morning, and which arose from a studied caution on the part of the young lady of which her ladyship scarcely suspected her capable, aided naturally, however, by the anticipation of the act of duty which she had subsequently to perform for her friend, and which engrossed most of her thoughts, superadded to her total abandonment of him in the evening, completed her security; and when, while they were lighting their bed-room candles at Dale Cottage, and her ladyship was winding up the day with her accustomed bottle of soda-water modified in the tumbler by a brown composition, which her butler called syrup with a very fine name, (but which the unmedical student would ignorantly have described as old cogniac,)

her ladyship ventured to try the effect of a little playful satire upon the manners and conversation of Miss Lovell, and she found Frederick, instead of firing up and bursting out as her defender and advocate, admitting that he thought she did not look quite so well as usual, and that her manner was very unsatisfactory, and that she was not the sort of person a man of condition would like to walk into a drawing-room with, hanging on his arm, her ladyship received the filial adieux of her dear George Augustus Frederick for the night, with a complacency and confidence which it must be confessed had been strangers to her mind during the last three weeks.

But what a night for Frederick ! devoted, as he really was to this amiable, admirable girl—a pattern for her sex—all kindness, all gentleness, all sweetness and truth—to think that, having encouraged his addresses, as she had decidedly done ; having, not perhaps directly or personally, but hypothetically, in conversation with himself and Mrs. Harbottle, expressed her approbation of temper, qualities, and accomplishments, such as he could not be so blind as not to perceive himself possessed of,

that approbation having been expressed in a manner which Mrs. Harbottle had led her to adopt, with a view to induce her devoted lover (for so he had unconsciously become,) to hope for that conclusion to his suit which she herself so much desired—to think that at once, abruptly, inconsiderately, and cruelly, as he felt it, she should abstract herself from the assembled party with a man for whom, twenty-four hours before, she had declared a total indifference in the character of lover—upon which she had before been rallied—seemed to him so wilfully, so unnecessarily coquettish and heartless, that he could only reconcile it with the exemplary rectitude of principle which he had previously so ardently admired in the whole course of her conduct, by exclaiming, as thousands of his fellow-men have exclaimed before him, and will exclaim when he shall be no more, “What extraordinary creatures these women are!”

Emma herself suffered deeply and bitterly. She had made a sacrifice which nothing but a noble and pious resolution to fulfil all the duties of life could have induced her to risk, in holding such a conversation as she had held with Charles Harvey; her mind,

her moral courage, rose above the difficulties which presented themselves to the interference of a girl inexperienced in the world's ways—unmarried—unprotected, except by her own purity of heart, and consciousness of rectitude, and to her discussion of such a point as that, in which she had engaged with a man, suspected too of being her lover.

What could she have done? how could she have acted? her dearest, best friend, had near her at the moment no friend but her; her conscience, in its “small, still voice,” had spoken volumes to her. Fanny—her dear kind Fanny had reverted with dread and trembling to the momentary slumber of her prudence, or perhaps the momentary awakening of her feelings, as one fraught with destruction to her own happiness, and—what perhaps she held as dear—the happiness of another. She was on the very edge of a precipice. The intervention of Emma's hand could prevent her fall—was it to be refused? Fanny could not remove herself from the scene of difficulty and danger—to rescue her from both, Emma had stepped from her natural sphere in society, and ventured all, to preserve her friend. But it must not be

supposed that she had been led blindly to assume the character of adviser or monitress, nor that she did not see the peril and delicacy—perhaps indelicacy—of the service she had undertaken. She saw it clearly—but as has been said before, she risked every thing—and felt happy in having, as she believed, succeeded in bringing Harvey to understand the necessity of his breaking off his constant association with Harbottle's family, without committing her friend by any admission of a partiality for him, which, even if it existed, had taken no form, no character, which the most rigid virtue could have disapproved.

But when she laid her head upon her pillow and recollected the pain she had evidently given Sheringham, the reproachful look which he cast upon her as she quitted the house, flashed strongly upon her. The world might think of her conduct—if the world could ever know it—as it pleased. What Lady Frances might have thought of her, or what the Squire might the next day say of her, were matters of perfect indifference to her, strong as she was in the consciousness of her good intentions; but that Sheringham should think her—as it turned out he did—the

frivolous, heartless flirt, which she must have appeared, was bitterly painful to her—the more painful, because she never could explain to him the real circumstances of the case; and because, if, as she sincerely hoped and really expected, Harvey should quit Binford on the morrow, his sudden disappearance would confirm the already excited suspicions of the Captain, that the lengthened conversation between them on the preceding evening, however it might have terminated, was upon a subject personally interesting to themselves, and of a nature which the repeated protestations of the young lady would, if he had not seen it, have led him to believe one, which could not for a moment have been entertained by her.

Harvey's meditations—although not amongst the Tombs—were of a deadly character—he had been awakened suddenly from a delightful but perilous dream. He felt at first indignant and then ashamed that Fanny had betrayed him; he could not have mistaken her meaning—she had admitted that she was not happy, and he had sympathized with her affliction—no thought had ever entered his head which could militate against her peace of mind, her honour, or the

honour of her husband. Why then expose him? Why drive him from her presence?—for the sake of appearances?—No—for he had lived on terms of the closest intimacy with her, for months, and no human being had dared to whisper a suspicion of any consequent impropriety—what was all this? did she dissemble when she wished him happiness, at the moment in which she was destroying the only happiness he possessed? and did she really wish him away? what could it mean?

Harvey was the least vain person in the world; and amongst all the reasons which he imagined Fanny to have for seeking a separation from him, that, which was certainly first amongst the number never struck him. He was told he had a duty to perform, the fulfilment of which alone could secure her peace of mind and ensure her respectability—that duty, heedless of the pain it might inflict upon himself, and without questioning her more, he resolved to do.

To describe the pangs which Fanny herself endured would be difficult; the complication of fears and reproaches with which her mind was filled—the sensitive recollection of the fatal walk—for so it proved to be—in which she

felt she had betrayed a sorrow which for years she had concealed; the consciousness of a change in Harvey's manner consequent upon that confession; the pain of parting with him, who while he joined in the pursuits of her husband, seemed to temporize with every thing disagreeable which might occur, soothe him when irritated, and even support him in his proper place while mixing with the lower classes of his neighbours, who were, in fact, his most frequent associates. A young man, who was of that husband the chosen, and certainly the most agreeable companion; suitable to him by his skill in all the sports of the field, and by a kind adaptation of his manner to the temper of his host;—in short, she felt that she was breaking a link in the chain of their society, the loss of which would create disorder and confusion in the establishment, and render her existence even more painful than it was. But she felt that she had trusted herself to the extreme limits of prudence, and that she dare not hesitate to decide upon the course she had to pursue.

What Harbottle suffered during the same night will require no great trouble, nor many

words to describe; once safely deposited upon his sinister side, his rubicund cheek snugly reposed upon an eider-down pillow, he fell incontinently to sleep, and when he awoke described to his fair Fanny the misery he had felt in a dream, that a five pound fish (at least,) had snapped off the top joint of his four guinea rod just as he thought he had safely landed him.

Happy Harbottle!

When the breakfast hour came, Fanny did not appear. Mrs. Devon, however, exhibited her pretty plump person, to make her lady's excuses.—“My mistress, sir” said she, “has got such a *very* bad headache, that she will breakfast in her dressing-room.”

This was communicated to the Squire, as he stood at the Hall door watching *the* chestnut cantering round the sweep before it.

“Headache,” said the Squire, “what an odd thing to have—she did not tell me she had a headache—well—I hope she'll soon get better—give my love to her, and say so.”

“—Yes, sir,” said Mrs. Devon, with a look which either he did not see, or seeing did not comprehend; “I hope she will, sir, *I'm sure.*”

“Holloa,” cried the Squire, seeing Hollis

crossing the Hall, "we are ready for breakfast—where's Mr. Harvey."

"I don't know, sir," said Hollis, with an expression of countenance, very different from that of Mrs. Devon, but which, if the Squire had been like Lady Frances, on the "look out" for effects, might have struck him.

"Is he up," said the Squire; "have you seen him about?"

"No, sir," said Hollis. "Evans says, his master has got a very bad headache this morning, and I rather think he has gone out to walk."

"What!" said Harbottle, "Harvey got a headache too—that's mighty strange. Why he had a headache last night, and still has got a headache this morning—that's odd. Your mistress has got one this morning and hadn't one last night—what is it?—any thing in the air—or the water—or the wine?—can't be in the wine because at the price I pay, there isn't a headache in a hogshead of it."

"No, sir," said Hollis, "I don't think it has any thing to do with *that* sir."

This observation, Mr. Hollis, who was an exemplary servant of the family—old, and conse

quently familiar with his master, favoured, and therefore presuming — meant should lead to some further interrogatories; but Harbottle's head was as firm as the wall of a fives' court, and the harder you hit him with a hint the stronger it came back to you, without having made the slightest impression.

“Well, then,” said the Squire, “I must breakfast by myself. *I* have no headache luckily, so cut me some of that cold roast beef—give me two eggs—a hot kidney, and a cup of chocolate, just to begin with.

All this was put *en train*, and Hollis hovered about, full of anxiety to make a *coup*, perhaps, with a good intention, which would infallibly have destroyed the peace of half a dozen innocent people; but he was as yet, unsuccessful, for a footman remained in the breakfast room during the greater part of the Squire's solitary repast, and before it was over, his head keeper obtained an audience, to depict in glowing colours the iniquitous proceedings of certain poachers, who, early as it was in the season, had been setting snares for the hares. This announcement superseded all other topics—the breakfast itself, elaborated as it was in its deli-

cacies was speedily concluded, and in ten minutes, the Squire on the back of the very best cob in England, was cantering down to the scene of villainy.

The complaint nick-named cholera has made great ravages in every country it has visited; the plague in its time has done even yet more mischief; but neither the plague nor cholera ever did more in a small circle than head-ache at Binford on the memorable day now under discussion. Harvey—with a violent headache—anticipating that Mrs. Harbottle, after what had occurred the night before, would rather avoid the breakfast table, felt above all things in the world the impossibility of maintaining his usual tone of conversation in a *tête-à-tête* with the Squire; he, therefore, (anxious moreover to evince to Emma Lovell the firmness of the determination to which he had come during a sleepless night) resolved to walk to the Parsonage and beg a breakfast of the exemplary Rector; knowing, as he did, that as that reverend and worthy divine was incapable of moving from his room without assistance, and wholly unable to walk about for pleasure—as walking is sometimes

called—he should have an opportunity in a short stroll after breakfast along the laurel walk which led to the church, to “say his say” to his charming daughter, who having assumed the character of plenipotentiary on the part of Mrs. Harbottle, and having stated the preliminaries of the treaty which she wished to enter into, had unquestionably subjected herself either to a conference with the other high contracting party, or to the evil of heaven knows how many protocols, which, after all, might like their namesakes upon greater occasions have come to nothing in the end.

This scheme he put into practice—was most readily accepted as a guest by the Rector, and heard with dismay the account of Miss Lovell’s headache, which was so extremely violent, that she could not come down to breakfast. Here was another “case”—decided—nor was his distress at all alleviated by finding an ancient maiden sister of the Rector’s (whose stay with her brother had afforded Emma the opportunity of spending more time at the Hall, than her exemplary attention to her father would otherwise have allowed her ;) *without* a headache, and in the

full possession of all that well-matured flightiness, which, to a young man in Harvey's temper of mind, was worse than death itself.

Breakfast proceeded slowly—the conversation flagged—Mr. Lovell was, as usual, amiable, and even eloquent; but as far as Harvey was concerned, his eloquence was wasted in the desert air. Miss Lovell the elder was pertinaciously particular as to the number of lumps of sugar he chose in his tea, and whether he liked cream; went through the catechism of her office with a rigorous punctuality most exemplary, and had just attained the *ultima thulé* of her knowledge, when the door opened and Captain Sheringham was announced, to the great delight of the Rector, who was charmed at seeing his neighbour—to the astonishment of Harvey—and as it turned out to the inexpressible dismay of the gallant Captain himself.

The moment he saw Harvey domesticated at the Rectory, he started back—he cast his eyes round—Emma was not there—this soothed him for the moment, but he looked as white as a sheet.

“Why, my dear Captain Sheringham,” said

the Rector, "you don't look well; what on earth is the matter with you?"

"Nothing, sir," said Sheringham, "nothing but a violent headache.

Another instance of the prevailing epidemic, for which the present appearance of affairs did not promise any thing like alleviation or cure. However much the temporary absence of Miss Lovell from the breakfast table might at the first blush of the scene have calmed Sheringham's apprehensions, the presence there, at that period of the day, unusual as he knew it was—of Harvey, combined with the agitation so perceptible in *his* countenance, and a nervous anxiety of manner which it was impossible for him to conceal, confirmed him in his worst suspicions. What but a conversation of the deepest interest, could have detained Emma with him for nearly an hour in the conservatory the evening before; and what termination could that conversation have had, but one propitious to the hopes and wishes of Harvey, which could have induced him, *contrary* to his usual course of life, to follow up so protracted and particular a dialogue by so early a visit to the Rectory.

Breakfast disposed of, and the Rector wheeled into his library, a scene followed, the like of which is often enacted in higher places, and by more important personages, which, being performed by two individuals, is in colloquial phraseology called—one seeing the other, out.

Harvey was seriously anxious to have a few minutes conversation with Miss Lovell, in order to announce the resolution at which he had arrived, having pledged himself to her, not to touch upon the subject of their conversation, to Fanny, nor to make any reference to its object, to *her* during his stay at Binford, even if the opportunity should accidentally be afforded him ; a circumstance which, however, Emma, told him she did not think would occur, since Fanny had resolved to avoid the possibility of a *tête-à-tête* with him. *He* therefore was fixed in his resolution to see the Parson's daughter.

Sheringham, on the other hand, first irritated by the marked preference, as he considered it, which Emma had shown the evening before to Harvey—then goaded still more by the well-timed and well-turned insinuations of his world-knowing mother, was now wound up to

the highest pitch of jealous indignation, by finding his rival, as he thought him, and his favoured rival, as he believed him, established in the very citadel.

“Are you going towards the Hall?” said he to Harvey, with a strained civility.

“Not yet,” replied Harvey.

“Where’s Harbottle,” said the Captain.

“At home, I suppose,” replied Harvey; “if you want to see him, I dare say you will find him alone.”

“Is Mrs. Harbottle ill?” said Sheringham.

“Not that I know of,” said Harvey; looking a little confused.

“I thought she seemed feverish last night,” said Sheringham.

“I did not observe,” said Harvey.

“No, you were botanizing all the evening,” said Sheringham; “did you discuss all the merits of the Darwin school. I am afraid Miss Lovell got cold.”

“No,” interrupted her aunt, “she has no cold, only a headache—she is not used to the late hours which she has been keeping at Mr. Harbottle’s since I have been stopping with my brother, and given her a holiday.”

“ Shall you go to the Hall to luncheon?” asked Harvey.

“ I don’t know,” answered Sheringham; “ I think not—I am engaged with my mother, and—”

“ I am going over to Smedley,” said Harvey.

“ When do you start?”

“ — Not yet—not till two.”

“ Will you come to *us*, and we will drive you over?” said Sheringham.

“ I cannot do that,” replied Harvey, for I—I have to meet a person—that—”

“ Oh!” interrupted Sheringham, “ I don’t want to question your proceedings; every man has his own particular pursuit—perhaps you are going botanizing again.”

“ Not I, indeed,” said Harvey, in a tone, which as it sounded somewhat melancholy, was extremely agreeable to Sheringham’s ears.

At this moment a footman entered the room, who walked directly up to Harvey, and in a sonorous voice, the tone of which strongly resembled the sound of a cracked trumpet, delivered this message.

“ My young lady, has sent down word, her

compliments, sir—she begs you won't go away till she has seen you."

Harvey made a sort of unintelligible answer, expressive of his obedience to her wishes. Sheringham stared with amazement at this open and unequivocal address to his rival, and the servant who had been told by Miss Lovell's maid to deliver her message to Mr. Harvey, (she not being aware that any other visiter was in the house,) strutted out of the room, banging the door after him, with a theatrical air, leaving the party in a profound silence, broken only by the retreating sound of his creaking shoes along the lobby.

"Well," said the Captain, after a moment's pause; "I'll go—I suppose my mother will like to drive early, and I am too dutiful to keep her waiting—good morning Mr. Lovell—good morning madam—good day, sir."

Saying which, the last words being addressed somewhat significantly to Harvey, (who, conscious of what was passing in Sheringham's mind, and anxious, without daring, to undeceive him, felt them sink deeply into his heart,) the gallant sea-officer quitted the Parsonage,

breathing vengeance upon his rival, and all sorts of maledictions upon the fickleness and frailty of women generally, but of Miss Emma Lovell most especially and particularly.

Things certainly did not go smoothly, and appearances fully justified all the feelings which agitated Sheringham's mind; feelings, of the strength of which he had no idea until they were thus suddenly and violently called forth. He had gone on loving, and loving without exactly knowing the condition of his own heart, and had been playing with Emma Lovell the same game of entanglement, that Harvey, with equal unconsciousness, had been carrying on with her friend Fanny. It is wonderful to see the blindness of man to his own position, and not less wonderful to see to what trifles his sudden enlightenment is sometimes owing.

As he walked home, the first decision to which the Captain came, was, that whatever he might eventually determine upon, as the line of conduct to pursue, he would not let his lady mother into his confidence. Stay in Binford he could not—would not—to be the tame spectator of his rival's triumph, and the consequences of Emma's heartlessness. It was clear *she* could

not quit the scene of action ; for even if after her marriage Harvey took her to his own house and home, still the position of her father in Binford, and her affectionate intimacy with Fanny, would bring her constantly thither, and indeed, the well known friendship of the Squire himself for the bridegroom elect, would render their visits neither few nor far between.

What had he best do ? If he did not confide his secret to Lady Frances, the facts would very shortly speak for themselves ; for Sheringham thought, (and reasonably enough it must be admitted) that after the conservatory scene in the evening, and the verbal message of the morning, the announcement of Emma's acceptance of Harvey could not long be delayed ; *that* he could not wait for ; because his mother would have gained so complete a victory over him, and would consequently thereupon indulge herself in so triumphant an exposure of the fallacy of all his doctrines and opinions about that amiable, unsophisticated, candid, affectionate child of nature, the Parson's daughter, that she would drive him mad. In the course of his progress homeward he at last formed a final resolution.

Harbottle, who though he was ordinarily obtuse enough, and took things quietly when they went on quietly of themselves, was not an unconcerned spectator of the events of this memorable morning; and the more concerned perhaps, inasmuch as his own personal comfort had been infringed. He had been left to breakfast alone; his wife pleaded a headache for not coming down, which she had not even mentioned half an hour before; Harvey's absence was unusual; and then he began to think the manner of Hollis, the butler, was strange, and that Mrs. Devon's conduct had something odd in it too; and at last, after revolving all these circumstances in what he called his mind, as he walked his cob back from the fields of poaching, he hit upon what he believed to be the truth; and coupling the strange dispersion of his little domestic party with the conservatory scene of the preceding evening, came to the determination that Harvey had popped (as he called it) to the Parson's daughter, and that the Parson's daughter had refused him. Full of this happy conceit, his anxiety to get hold of his young friend, to rally him upon the

repulse he had encountered, was particularly strong.

Unfortunately, however, Mrs. Harbottle knowing that her husband had quitted the house, and not knowing that he had returned, and being in the most nervous state of expectation of the appearance of her old friend and ally Emma Lovell, happened to present herself to the eyes of her admiring husband as he was crossing the hall, and she was descending the staircase.

“Why, Fan,” said the Squire, “your head well already!—glad of it, old lady. Well, where’s Harvey? Is he gone away for ever? What has happened to him—love, I suppose, eh, Fan?—love, and a little indiscretion in bringing things to a conclusion too hastily?—Ha! ha! ha!”

“I am sure,” said Mrs. Harbottle, “I don’t know. What do you mean?”

“Oh, fie! Fan,” said the Squire, “as if you and Emma were not in each other’s secrets. What was all that talk in the greenhouse last night about?”

“Last night!” stammered Mrs. Harbottle.

“Yes, last night, Mrs. Grave-airs,” said her husband; “none are so blind as those who won’t see, my love; none so deaf as those who won’t hear. Do you think to trick me? No no, Fan—I’m wide awake to all that is going on.”

Fanny felt herself ready to sink through the earth.

“Nothing can be more natural,” continued Harbottle; “so far from blaming Harvey, my idea of the thing is simply this, give a young man encouragement, and you must look out for the consequences; and I know that you—I saw it by your manner—you set her to do what she did last night, which has upset poor Charles; and will no doubt drive him away from our house, and rob me of one of my most agreeable companions. I knew something had happened while he was out fishing, he was as dull and as dead as a ditchwater, and what the evening before had begun, last night concluded. I tell you what, mistress Fan, you women would do well to consider in the first instance—it is the *premier pas*, that *coutes*, as the French say, and I do think, after fooling a man like a child in leading strings, for half a year, to let

him go, slap bang, as I call it, in a minute, is an infernal shame."

The opinions of Mr. Harbottle, delivered so oracularly, founded, as they were, upon an apparently perfect knowledge of facts, startled his already agitated lady into a state of hysterical feeling, a kind of April sensation of rain and sunshine, which it required all her physical strength, and all her mental determination to check. It was impossible that he really did know the nature of Emma's conversation with Harvey on the preceding evening, and yet hold the mild and moderate language in which he addressed her; nor was it upon the cards, that he should argue upon the heartlessness of his own wife's conduct, in first encouraging and then repelling the attentions of her husband's friend. What could it mean? Into her mind never at the moment flashed the idea that he believed in the existence of an attachment, on the part of Harvey, towards Miss Lovell, because she knew of her own knowledge—somewhat hazardously obtained—that his affections were otherwise directed, and moreover, because she also knew that Emma's heart was irrecoverably gone, and that no power on earth could

wean or force her from her devotion to Sheringham, of whom she had expressed to her friend her unqualified admiration.

But while Fanny was thus doubting how to receive the agreeable raillery of her husband, whose playfulness very much resembled in character that of the heavy animal, which as the fable tells, attempted to ape the lap-dog, who should arrive in sight, on the lawn, but Emma Lovell, leaning on the arm of Charles Harvey, evidently in earnest conversation with him upon some interesting topic, in which both parties had been so much absorbed, that they had not seen the unfortunate Captain George Augustus Frederick Sheringham, R. N., whom they had passed, as he was slowly sauntering homewards under the trees, debating whether he should put into immediate execution the design which it has already been mentioned he had formed, and which the very agreeable spectacle he had just witnessed, did not in any degree conduce to procrastinate.

The sight of the coming couple exhilarated the Squire so much, that quitting his lady, who had not strength either to accompany or follow him, he gave his usual view holloa, which

echoed through the woods, and then ran forward to meet the much disconcerted pair.

“I’m glad to see this,” said the Squire. “I have just been talking over your long gossip of last night, with Fanny. She has confessed, at least she has not denied, that I have found out the whole secret, and I have given her a good jobation, as I call it, for breaking up a snug party, and driving you away.”

Emma looked at Harvey—Harvey looked at Emma.

“Why, you think I don’t know the whole affair,” said Harbottle. “I’m not such a fool, Charles, as you and my wife think me; but I care less about it, for as I see you here together, I conclude you have made matters up and I shall hear no more about going off, and going out, and leaving me to breakfast by myself, my wife ill with a headache, and my friend sick with a heartache.”

“I don’t quite comprehend you,” said Emma. “What possible connection can my innocent conversation with Mr. Harvey have with his going out and leaving you this morning, or why should our walk in the conservatory necessarily imply a quarrel?”

“Why did he slink to bed?—Eh, master Charles, answer that; stole away, sly fox—could not face us after the interview, good, bad, or indifferent, which ever it was: and you, demure Emma, who look, as I say, as if butter would not melt in your mouth, why did you snub the poor fellow as you did? *I* heard what you were at—a man cannot help his feelings, and what if he did fancy he was better thought of, than he really was, why, as I say, the woman’s always to blame. Ha! ha! ha!”

“Upon my word,” said Miss Lovell, increasing her rate of walking, “I do assure you I do not in the least understand what you are talking of. Though Mrs. Harbottle and I—and —”

And so away ran Emma, too much bewildered to comprehend in the least the extraordinary, and to her ear, equivocal allusions of the Squire.

“Well, Charles,” said Harbottle, when Emma had, like a sylph, flitted across the lawn, and joined her equally amazed and agitated friend, “Where did you breakfast?—at the Parson’s?”

“I did,” said Charles.

“That’s right,” replied his friend; “faint heart never won fair lady—knocked down last night, up again this morning; the *iræ amorum* as I used to say at school, turned into the *integratio amoris*—that’s good Greek isn’t it? well, you got snubbed for your boldness and went to bed to cry, *I* dare say—at ’em again says you—so you breakfasted with the Parson, foraged upon the enemy, and took your prisoner.”

“I am going away for a week or two,” said Charles, “so I went to the Rectory to take leave of Mr. Lovell and his sister.”

“Oh, you *are* going away,” said Harbottle, “and arn’t I as good as a witch; and our little snow-drop, as I call her, is the cause.”

“No,” said Harvey; “I have really business in London which must be attended to; here the days fly so sweetly and so rapidly, that unless I make a dash and break the charm at once, I shall go on in a dream of blessed happiness and be ruined for my negligence.”

“Come, come, Master Harvey,” said his hospitable host, “you have no business in London; you have been snubbed—the women-folk, as I call them, have driven you away;

however, you must do as you please. I force no man, only I *do* bargain for three days more of you—try us for only three days—I'll engage that Emma shall not poison you, and Fanny will enter into the same compact. I have got some pleasant folks coming here to stay till Friday, and go before *that*, you positively shall not."

Harvey who, after a severe struggle with his feelings, had agreed to the condition of withdrawing himself, felt a sort of secret satisfaction at being forced, by Harbottle, to break that condition, so that by doing a *douce violence* to his conscience, he might safely affirm that he was unable to refuse the pressing invitation of Harbottle to stay three days more, without exciting a strong suspicion in his mind, that there really was some serious reason for his sudden departure; he, therefore, with his eyes fixed upon Fanny and Emma, and perfectly conscious of the subject of their conversation, made an odd sort of unintelligible noise, which might serve for a negative or an affirmative, but which Harbottle, (who with all his faults was the most hospitable creature breathing) instantly construed into a favourable reply to his invi-

tation ; and having heard it, he hurried with his friend to join the ladies, and inform his wife that he had succeeded in keeping Charles till Friday morning, in spite of the ill-treatment of Miss Lovell.

The reproachful look which Emma glanced at the unhappy young gentleman was lost upon the Squire, whose attention not having yet been that way directed, was not devoted at that moment to Fanny ; perhaps, if it had been, he might have read in *her* lovely countenance, a still stronger evidence of the dismay which the alteration of Charles's resolution had excited in her.

The dread which she endured had been thus created. In the anxiety of her heart to put a stop to a delusion which appeared to her to subsist at least on one side, and which must lead, as she felt, to misery or ruin, perhaps, to both, she had taken such a course as proved her consciousness of its existence. After the conversation which she had begged Emma to have with Charles, she could no longer affect to be ignorant of the turn which his friendship—at least—had taken ; nor were the subsequent declarations of Harvey to Miss Lovell in their morning's

walk at all calculated to put Fanny's agitation to rest; in fact, she herself, with the best possible motives, had fired the train—a day's delay might cause its explosion. With this consciousness of how far she had committed herself, and a knowledge of Charles's affection for her (since confessed to Emma,) every hour's procrastination of his departure accumulated new pains and perils for them both.

Fanny's desire for his going, was not founded upon any hope of being relieved from the misery of her own thoughts by his absence; she felt that having one object constantly in the mind, was even more dangerous than having it always in sight—for as somebody (I forget now, who) has said, "We are not accustomed to keep such an exact guard over our thoughts, as we are compelled to keep upon our actions; and when the mind once gives itself up to a separate pleasure, the heart grows jealous, and slyly steals in for its share."

The thing appeared, however, decided, and both the ladies felt that their taking any part in persuading Mr. Harvey not to stay, would, besides irritating the inflammable Squire, have a very extraordinary appearance, and one which

might lead to explanations by no means seasonable or agreeable.

They, therefore, contented themselves with a few common-place observations, and having made those, fell off as it were, in their walk with the beaux, and left the Squire and his friend to visit the stables, and eventually to ride together; the Squire having previously begged his lady to invite Lady Frances and the Captain to dinner, she having expressed an intention of going to make a visit at Dale Cottage during the morning; an intention founded on the determination of avoiding the usual "luncheon" at home.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Oh Love ! how are thy precious sweetest moments
Thus ever crossed, thus vexed with disappointments.”

ROWE.

“ WHAT a trial will the three next days be for *me*,” said Mrs. Harbottle to Emma, when they parted from the men, and were on their way to Lady Frances ; “ and yet, I do not see how, without exciting *his* suspicion, Charles could have refused to stop.”

“ Nor I,” said Emma.

“ To think,” continued Fanny, half in soliloquy, “ that I should have reduced myself to such a position as that in which I actually find myself ; did you hear, Emma, what I said just this moment ? did you hear me talk of exciting *his* suspicion ?—how fallen am I in my own estimation within the few last hours of my life ;—

up to yesterday, neither had I fear of *his* suspicions, nor he cause to be suspicious. I had no care for the events of the day ; no anxiety, no watchfulness—all—all was clear, and plain before me—I had no deceit—and even if I had thoughts to conceal, I had no wishes to suppress ; but now, owing to my own weakness,—wickedness is it not?—I am the sport of feelings, of which a week ago I had no knowledge, and the victim of apprehensions which were then strangers to my mind.

“ My dearest Fanny,” said Emma, “ you unjustly accuse, and unnecessarily agitate yourself ; you have done all that you could do ; conscious of the possibility of your feelings being misconstrued by a young man, who is living on the most intimate terms in your family, you have caused the expressions, which you perhaps inadvertently used in a conversation with him, to be so explained, as to set the matter entirely at rest. After feeling that such an explanation was necessary, I agree with you, that his going, merely as removing an object from your society, which is associated in your mind with regret, is most desirable : at your entreaty I tell him so ; he

assents to the proposition; do, therefore, bear up for these next three days, mix in general society, affect a gaiety, if you have it not, and hereafter when you meet him again, you will meet upon as friendly terms as ever."

"Ah, Emma," replied Fanny, "that inadvertence, as you call it—has been the ruin of my happiness; you may rely upon it, the affection which is declared is never so strong as that, which betrays itself—a premeditated speech is never half so eloquent as an involuntary sigh, and those words in which I inadvertently betrayed the real feelings of my heart, will be sooner or later fatal to some of us."

"My dear Fanny," said Emma, "if you treat the matter so very gravely, and feel it so very deeply, I shall begin almost to fear, that the agitation which Charles's brief stay occasions, will be succeeded by a bitterer feeling when he goes."

"No, no, no, I declare to you," said Fanny, emphatically, "I have no hesitation in telling you; why should I?—you know it—you must see it, that I admire Charles. I think him a delightful companion—I am charmed

with his society, his conversation, his accomplishments; and I could have gone on for ever, happy in his acquaintance upon the terms, on which I have now been so long enjoying it; but little as I may be supposed to know of the world, I know that my mind is unsettled;—that I have committed myself;—that his feelings towards me will undergo a change;—and that being conscious of an interest on my part, which ought not to exist, he—”

“ — Dearest Fanny,” interrupted Emma, “indeed, indeed, he understands and feels exactly as he ought, and as you must wish him to feel. I fear I have incautiously alarmed you by repeating some of the expressions of affection and admiration, which, in the course of our conversation he made use of; but is it not natural he should do so? you candidly admit the gratification you have experienced in his society, and the admiration *you* feel for his conversation and accomplishments—why should he not reciprocate those feelings?—Surely there is neither sin nor shame in this.—Is there to be no such thing as friendship in the world?”

“ You are too kind—too indulgent to your

unhappy friend," said Mrs. Harbottle, "you endeavour to soothe me into a belief of my total innocence in this affair—you think me innocent. I feel myself so; but no *man*, I am sure, can be persuaded that a woman would complain of her unhappiness, and appeal to the friend of her husband in her distress, without some object; and then—oh, would to heaven I had died before I had spoken those words."

"Fanny, I must insist upon your calming your feelings," said Miss Lovell:—"they are needlessly excited.—The delay of these three days—however much I may lament it,—because in your present temper of mind, it will, I know, annoy and worry you—is, in fact, a matter of no consequence:—he sees the propriety of parting.—"

"There," said Fanny, "there, Emma, you have said it; as *I* talk of my husband's suspicions, *he* admits the propriety of parting from *me*. When were *we*—when were our names before associated? when before were our interests spoken of in common? No, no, my happiness is gone for ever. I trust in his honour implicitly and confidently; but to be obliged to trust

any man, except my husband—even in thought—Oh, no, no, no.”

“Dearest Fanny,” said Emma, “I can enter into all your views. I respect your principles, I admire your delicacy; but for his sake and your own, strive against these feelings. He is pledged to me not to seek, and you have resolved not to permit any thing like a conversation apart with him—surely you can treat him like any other visiter.”

“I fear not, Emma,” said Mrs. Harbottle, “the consciousness that I have betrayed a feeling towards my husband, such as I expressed to him, must always keep him in my thoughts; and the confidence I reposed in him will ever be associated in my memory with himself; but with this I will struggle—and, by the help of Providence, I will conquer it.”

This conversation (which brought the ladies to the gate of Dale Cottage), gave Emma more uneasiness than any communication she had yet had with her friend, for, from its tone and character, she almost feared that Fanny had been deceiving herself, as to her real feelings towards Harvey; and that in point of fact

she began to repent of having made the *éclat*, by letting her friend into her confidence, and deputing her to break off her association with him.

It was, however, but a transient alarm. Fanny's was a situation of difficulty as well as delicacy; she had acted upon the impulse of feeling—she had decided according to the dictates of prudence—she had resolved upon her course—she had followed it; and yet, we must allow her to have been in some degree blamelessly influenced by a gentler sentiment towards one of whom she thought so highly, and with whom she did not believe herself capable of conversing collectedly upon the topic nearest her heart.

That she was right as to the effect the whole affair was likely to produce upon Charles, we have already seen; and it certainly seemed something like a strange interposition of fate, that Harbottle should so peremptorily refuse his consent to Harvey's departure. So, however, it was, and the three days trial had not yet begun. Those three days in France, nick-named, in the jargon of the modern revolutionists, "*glorious*," were

scarcely more eventful to a nation, than the coming Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, were to the house of Harbottle.

In answer to the inquiries of the fair pedestrians at Dale Cottage, they were informed, that Lady Frances was gone to Smedley, a romantic village in the neighbourhood.

“To be sure,” said Emma, “I might have saved you your visit, Fanny; for my father told me that Captain Sheringham was going to drive Lady Frances over there.”

“The Captain is not gone with my lady, Miss,” said the footman, “her ladyship is driving herself.”

“Shall I leave the message, Emma,” said Fanny, “or shall I send a note when we get home.”

The difficulty did not appear insurmountable in either way, and it was altogether overcome by Mrs. Harbottle's performing both evolutions, leaving a verbal invitation to dinner *then*, and “reminding” her ladyship and the Captain with a note afterwards.

“Do you know, Fanny,” said Miss Lovell, as they were returning to the Hall, “I begin to have some doubts as to the evenness of

Captain Sheringham's temper; there was a sort of sullenness almost amounting to ill-nature in his manner to me last night, which—

“——ought,” interrupted her friend, “to have been in the highest degree satisfactory to you; that is, if he happens to be as dear to you, as I believe him to be: he was in an agony of despair and jealousy during the whole of your conversation with Charles; and whatever doubts I had before of the serious character of his attachment to you, the conduct of which you affect to complain, set them completely at rest.”

“Our long absence,” said Emma, “must have had a strange effect; but I heeded neither Mr. Harbottle's jests nor Captain Sheringham's frowns. I know I was doing a duty to my friend—that it was a painful one, I admit; and as matters have since turned out, perhaps it would have been as well that that conversation had not taken place.”

In order to avoid the society of the now *dreaded* Harvey, Mrs. Harbottle suggested visiting the Parsonage, and making a stay there during the period of the day usually appropriated to luncheon at the Hall. The expected visitors would not make their appear-

ance much before dressing time, and as for any ride or drive, which the ladies might propose, it would be impossible to decline the attendance of Harvey and the Squire, or most probably Harvey alone, if they encountered them before the carriage or horses were ordered.

This arrangement was made—they proceeded to the Rectory, and having thence dispatched her note to Lady Frances and the Captain, Mrs. Harbottle remained with her friend till it was time for her to return home, and at a period when she was pretty sure of not meeting either her husband or his friend.

In due time came the “pleasant,” “agreeable people,” to enjoy whose society, Charles was made prisoner. Three hard-headed fox-hunters, with rosy cheeks and thick scrubbing-brush-looking hair—one of them with a fair delicate bride, and a brown boisterous sister—a silent man with a talkative wife—and a deaf lawyer from the next market town. They were the dearest friends Harbottle had, out of Binford, that is to say, they were (like his more immediate neighbours,) his creatures, his satellites, and he could rule and command them with un-

qualified potentiality ; and therefore it was, that he desired Lady Frances should be present to witness the exercise of his authority. The gratification of this passion for social superiority, gave an air of swaggering authority to his manners, and his *dicta* were upon such occasions fulminated in a tone of authority, which he scarcely knew how to subdue, when he was placed, in what to him was the painful situation of being in the society of his superiors. It is a shrewd remark, and made by a shrewd person, that the man who loves to be the highest of his company, will, in all probability, in time sink to be the lowest of it.

It would be vain as it is unnecessary to describe the feelings of Fanny and Charles, during the painful half hour before dinner ; he endeavoured to make conversation with the sportsmen, and Fanny tried to be more than ordinarily lively and chatty with the ladies. Harbottle was in high spirits, and Emma Lovell in high beauty.

“ Fan, dear,” said the Squire, “ is the carriage gone down for the Sheringhams? ’gad, it’s late. Breguer has just struck seven, second bell has rung, dinner serving, never wait. As I say, Snagthorpe, what’s the use of giving five hun-

dred a-year to a cook, if the man has not fair play? In dining and fighting, eh!—time's the word. Capital cook he is, as, indeed, I believe all of you here know pretty well. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Lady Frances Sheringham," was announced.—Mrs. Harbottle rose to meet and receive her; and Emma's lily cheek flushed, and her snowy bosom heaved, and her heart beat, as her ladyship advanced. Anxious to know whether the clouds of the preceding evening had vanished from George Sheringham's features, and resolved, under the opinion of Mrs. Harbottle, to let the sunshine of her eyes dissipate any slight gloom which might remain, if she perceived encouraging symptoms of a favourable change in the weather on his part, the timid girl looked round to observe the expression of the gallant Captain's countenance.

But if her heart palpitated then—and it *did*—and her cheek flushed, and her bosom heaved, what happened, when Lady Frances had reached the middle of the drawing room, and before she had received the "accolade" of Mrs. Harbottle, Emma saw the door closed, and saw no Captain George Augustus Frederick Sheringham make his appearance to be shone upon.

For a moment she fancied that he had turned to speak to some of the guests in the other drawing room; but no, he was not there.

“Lady Frances,” said the Squire, “where is the Captain?”

“Why, upon my word, Mr. Harbottle,” said her ladyship, “I know just as little as you do: he promised to drive me to Smedley, but when the poney phaeton came, he was ‘absent without leave,’ as he would himself say. I therefore drove myself, and when I returned I found a note from him, saying that he had received a letter which held out hopes of employment; and that, anxious not to lose a moment, he had started without waiting to take leave of me, or, as he adds, of ‘any body else.’ He tells me I shall hear in a day or two, and the servants think he is gone to town. *Voilà l’histoire.*”

More comforts for the company. Emma saw in an instant the cause of Sheringham’s sudden departure. The gloom of the preceding evening had, by the unforeseen events of the morning, been converted into anger; and the jealousy which had no doubt been smouldering throughout the night, had burst into a flame, on his

finding his imaginary rival seated at the Rector's breakfast table.

Fanny, of course, felt the same conviction; her eyes met Emma's,—their looks were mutually intelligible.

“Gone, is he?” said the Squire; “now that's all your fault, Miss Emma; that's just the thing, two strings to your bow, or, as my friend Snagthorpe here would say, two beaux in your string. You thought to worry him last night, by carrying off Master Charles, and now, by Jove, he is gone, ha! ha! ha! Broken hearted, I dare say, my Lady. Ha! ha! ha!”

“I really believe,” said Lady Frances, “that he is yet safe and heart-whole, not that I am in his confidence; for although he is somewhat addicted to flirting, he has not a grain of sentiment in his composition. I fancy his present object is a ship, rather than a wife.”

Her ladyship, whose opinion of the cause of her son's departure was not entirely at variance with that of the Squire, delivered these last few words in a marked manner and a particular tone, looking Emma full in the face, who, conscious of her ladyship's meaning, was ready to sink

through the floor. How long she might have been able to battle against her feelings, it is impossible to say; luckily the announcement of dinner put an end to the struggle.

After a two hours' display of boisterous mirth and empty ostentation, the ladies left the dining room, and the sportsmen to the enjoyment of their social pleasures; of which, however, the fair creatures were still made in some degree partakers, for the shouts, and huzzas, and tally-ho's which marked the admiration of the gentlemen for the toasts and sentiments which emanated from the Squire, in the chair, made the house ring again, and echoed through the hall to the more peaceful recesses of the drawing-room.

Coffee having been twice or three times ordered, and as many times countermanded, and "more claret" having been as many times called for, it appeared to some of the quietest members of the community, time to join the ladies; and accordingly the deaf lawyer led the way, followed by Charles Harvey, who, though pledged to Emma to seek no private conversation with Mrs. Harbottle, felt that he was not pledged to remain any longer where he was. The advanced guard was soon followed by the main *corps*

d'armée, and the rear brought up by Harbottle himself, whose appearance, on his entrance to the drawing room, convinced his anxious lady that he had arrived at that state in which most of all, she dreaded to see him, when his mind, such as it was, was just brought to a state of oscillation between outrageous merriment and savage rage, and when the balance was so equal, that a grain in either scale would predominate. In these humours he was habituated to the use of what he imagined raillery ; and if before dinner he had acquired an idea, (or as he used to call it, a notion,) of any thing which might be going on, and in which his associates might be engaged, he would in the evening, after his copious libations, which were to his mind what varnish is to a picture, and brought out all its beauties or deformities, as the case might be, invariably try back upon the graver conversations of the earlier part of the day, and bring forward again all the arguments he had previously adopted, and the observations he had previously made, but with a tenfold strength of language.

Knowing this peculiarity, Fanny was convinced that Miss Lovell would come under his particular observation, the moment they met ; and,

moreover, was she convinced that the turn of the conversation, while tormenting to Emma, would probably induce a quarrel with Lady Frances, who had expressed herself after dinner in no very equivocal terms, as to her views and intentions with respect to her son. To these apprehensions on the part of Mrs. Harbottle, was superadded the impossibility, in case the conversation should take that turn, of avoiding a discussion upon the conservatory scene, which must necessarily place Charles and herself in an equally embarrassing position.

“What are you two doing in this corner?” said Harbottle, addressing Lady Frances and Mrs. Snagthorpe, who were playing at *écarté*.

“Why,” said Lady Frances, “—this—lady (her name was impracticable) and I have been endeavouring to while away time, which I suppose has been flying with you, till you joined us.”

“Ah!” said the Squire, looking vacantly, or as he meant it, wisely, at the table, “for my part I do like wine, and I don’t like cards—I don’t understand cards. I never play for pleasure, and I won’t play for money; winning a hundred or two pounds would be no

object to me, and losing half as much would put me in passion."

"Yes," said her ladyship, "as poor Mr. Sheringham used to say, playing high is purchasing anxiety at a thousand pounds an hour."

"Come," said the Squire, "let's all do something; has every body seen the house? If they haven't, I'll shew it, Hollis get candles; and—come, Lady Frances, I'll be hanged if you have seen my house yet."

"Well, let me finish my *partie*," said her ladyship.

"*Partie!*—oh, that's French," said the Squire; "I hate French, and I hate every thing but having my own way—Come, who's for up stairs?"

Some of those who had, and some who had not visited the galleries and passages of his mansion, followed the Squire in his progress.

Fanny and Emma hoped that Lady Frances would have done a *douce violence* to her feelings, and joined the exploring party;—but no,—she remained at her *écarté*: and as Mrs. Harbottle was doomed to be Mrs. Snagthorpe's adviser, the two ladies most interested in passing events had no opportunity of communicating their ideas or opinions.

Emma Lovell, it must be confessed, was in a worse position than her friend. Fanny had chalked out a line of conduct, she had followed it, and however much a few hours delay might militate against her entire tranquillity or cause her some transient uneasiness, her point was carried, her object was gained, and she would at the end of the week be restored, if not to perfect repose, at least to the comparative comfort of feeling conscious that she had acted prudently and honourably, and that however great the sacrifice might be which she had made, the result which she proposed in making it, had been secured.

But, with Emma the case was wholly and entirely different.—Secluded from the world, living in the quiet fulfilment of every duty, filial and social, in the small circle of which she was the pride and ornament, her thoughts and wishes strayed not beyond the boundaries of the fertile valley in which her father had taken up his rest, and her gentle mind, unused to the excitements of gaiety or the allurements of flattery, full of tenderness and kindness, had received with unaffected pleasure the attentions and devotion of such a man as Sheringham.

That he was charmed with *her* we know, for in his character and disposition there were a frankness and ingenuousness which rendered it impossible for him to conceal his feelings, even if he had thought it essential to endeavour to do so.

Emma, unschooled in the world's ways, was equally incapable of duplicity ; and thus either of them seemed confident in the affection of the other. Although a word of love had never been exchanged between them, Emma, conscious of his regards, felt pleased and gratified ; and he, almost assured by her manner that when the moment of declaration came, he should not be rejected, loved and lingered on, happy in her society, and delighted with the traits of excellence in her character, which were daily developing themselves.

What had *she* done?—Conscious as she felt herself that Sheringham always feared the rivalry of Charles Harvey, she had selected Charles as the partner of a protracted dialogue, apart from the rest of the society, which dialogue had terminated by her disappearance, and her assumption of a character, and for the first time in her life the enactment of a

part, to disguise the real truth. She tested Sheringham's conduct by her own feelings; she reflected upon what *she* should have suffered if he had singled out some fair girl to devote himself to, for the evening, and abstract himself with, and if at the end of a lengthened conversation they had parted evidently under the influence of strong feelings—thus it was she judged her own conduct;—thus did she revolve the events of the preceding day, and coupling those with the occurrences of the morning at the Rectory, arrive at the resolution that she had behaved in a manner unjustifiable, because inexplicable, to the being of whose love for her she was conscious—a consciousness acquired, it must be confessed, by a process, the result of which was the incontrovertible certainty that *she* loved *him*.

“Here we are, here we are!” cried the Squire, dancing into the drawing-room, followed by his group of equally merry friends—“that *écarté* not done yet—I say, Fan, dear Fan, let us do something till supper; let's play blind-man's-buff, hide-and-seek; Miss Snagthorpe is all for a game.”

Here the burst of noise was terrific.

“ Hunt the slipper, anything,” cried Harbottle; “ What’s to be had for fun, let’s have; what’s to be had for money, we will have. Ha! ha! ha!”

Here Lady Frances, having in vain attempted to stop her ears, laid down her cards, paid her points, and drawing on her glove retired to the sofa.

“ What shall it be, my lady?” said the Squire, “ eh, hunt-the-slipper; bless your old soul, you’d like it, I know you would. Ha! ha! ha!”

“ Hide-and-seek,” cried the voices of several, who were convinced by the sinuosities of passages and difficult ascents and descents which they had just traversed, that the house was admirably calculated for that game.

“ So be it—so be it,” said Harbottle, “ who shall hide—let’s see—somebody who knows the house ought to hide first. Fan—Fan, you should hide—you and Charles Harvey—you two first—Come—where is he—Come, away with you; stow yourselves away in some dark corner, and cry whoop when we may follow; ha! ha! ha! They’ve played at it a hundred

times before, so we shall have old nick's work to catch them ; ha ! ha ! ha ! ”

What was to be done ? Nothing but comply ; the least check to Harbottle's will, when in his present humour, would have produced something not very unlike a paroxysm of madness. Fanny, per force, obeyed—and Harvey, scarcely conscious of what he was doing, accompanied her to the hiding-place, according to her husband's directions.

They proceeded along the passages, and having ensconced themselves in a dark room, the door of which happened to be open—the signal was given, and the seekers set forth.

Charles had, involuntarily—unconsciously, taken Fanny's hand,—it was as cold as ice and shook fearfully.

“ Good God ! ” said Charles ; “ What a situation to be thrown into, after what has occurred.”—

“ For heaven's sake, Charles,” said Fanny ; “ remember your pledge—I—trust to your honour.”—

“ One only word,” replied Charles ; “ remember when I am gone.”—

“No, no,” said Fanny, “not one syllable—they are here, they are here.”

And, accordingly, the train of thoughtless ones swept by, making all the lobbies and staircases ring with their boisterous mirth as they passed the door. Fanny ran off, followed, of course, by Charles, to some other place of security from the mimic hunters.

Two minutes afterwards a third person quitted the room, which they had temporarily occupied, who had not been seen in it by either Charles or Fanny.

CHAPTER IX.

“ You think yourselves the finest gentlemen
When you are most to be despised and pitied ;
Not monkies can be more ridiculous !
Besides the infamy you must contract
In the opinion of the good and wise.
As soon I'd choose a madman for a friend ;
You vomit secrets when o'ercharged with wine—
You often quarrel with the best of friends—
And she must be as bold as is a lioness
Who takes you for a husband. Drink, in short,
Provokes you to all folly, to all vice,
Till you become a nuisance to mankind.”

SHADWELL.

WHEN the next morning's sun awakened the Squire from his slumbers, to a consciousness of existence, he felt as if amidst the chaos of events and incidents of the preceding evening he recollected having done a vast many foolish things, the precise nature or character of

which, however, he could not establish at all to his satisfaction. He had either said or done something outrageous to Lady Frances, and something excessively silly to Miss Snagthorpe, and had affronted Emma Lovell, and scolded his wife before her guests; but as the detail of all his follies would not be by any means entertaining to the reader we will leave him to the enjoyment of that sort of retrospective feeling, of having somehow committed himself the night before, which frequently worries a man in the morning, but which is never wrought to a much higher pitch than when he wakes to the certainty of having lost half his fortune before he went to sleep.

The only permanent sentiment in Mr. Harbottle's mind, was resentment towards his unhappy Fanny. Upon what particular account he could not so well remember, but the point was established, and, therefore, as she either was or seemed to be wrapped in peaceful slumber when her excellent spouse thought proper to bestir himself, he did not disturb her repose by inquiring into the cause of quarrel, or soliciting her forgiveness of his intemperance.

Not he; his usual course after one of these exhibitions was to proceed silently, perhaps sullenly to his dressing room, and having made his toilet without calling any servant to his assistance, go down stairs into his own room, and having loitered about, having no pursuit which led him to read or write, excepting, indeed, after the arrival of the post, to answer any business letters which he might receive from his banker or his lawyer, generally stroll to the hall door, where, having inhaled some of the freshness of the morning, he used, if he fell in with his ancient serving-man, and now house-steward, Hollis, endeavour to learn from him such particulars of his own individual conduct on the preceding evening, as in the whirl of his brain he had himself forgotten—and this he usually did with what he considered a prodigious deal of tact and dexterity.

It so happened upon the particular morning in question, that he encountered this man on his return from the breakfast parlour, whither he had been to inspect the preparations for the matin meal.

“Hollis,” said the Squire, “were you up

when the carriage came back from taking Lady Frances and Miss Lovell home?"

"Yes, Sir," said Hollis, "it was about two o'clock."

"Pray, did I—I forget," said the Squire, "did I give the coachman any orders about having two carriages ready for the ladies to-day?"—

"I did not hear, Sir," said Hollis, "but I'll send to the stables and inquire."

"No," said the Squire; "I'll go—myself—pray—did Lady Frances say she would come up and join the party, when she went away?"—

"No, Sir," said Hollis; "I understood her ladyship quite different from that.—She seemed, I thought, in a great passion and taking about something. I believe it was chiefly on account of something you said to her about the Captain and Miss Lovell, Sir."—

So much of this dialogue as the reader has yet overheard, will, perhaps, serve to show the familiar nature of the communications which frequently passed between this uncouth master and his long-tried servant. The sequel will, perhaps, enlighten the said reader somewhat farther.

“What!” said Harbottle, “did I joke my lady about that, —and did Miss Lovell hear me?”—

“Yes, to be sure she did, Sir,” said Hollis, “so did all the servants; for it was in the hall; and Miss Lovell seemed very much vexed and frightened.”

“And was Mr. Harvey there? What did *he* say?” said Harbottle.

“I really dont know,” said Hollis somewhat significantly, “I dont think Mr. Harvey *was* there—I think most likely he was not.”

“Because,” said Harbottle, continuing the conversation in his strange and unaccountable manner, “he is Miss Lovell’s sweetheart, and is going off from us on her account.”

“Indeed, Sir,” said Hollis, “I should not have thought *that*—however—I shan’t be very sorry to see *his* back turned to this house.”

“Why, Hollis?” said the Squire, “I know *I* shall be very sorry, but when once a woman’s in the case there’s an end of everything, so if he must go, he must.”

“*I say* nothing, Sir,” said Hollis, “but my belief is, that it would have been just as well if he never had come here.”

“ I dare say it might for him, poor fellow,” replied the Squire carelessly, his thoughts not in the slightest degree directed into the channel to which his “ excellent ” domestic was endeavouring to invite them, and he turned away to visit the stables without suffering himself to be farther edified by his valuable retainer.

Fidelity in an ancient servant, is most admirable and praise-worthy, and much to the credit of this Hollis would it have been if he could have saved his master from dishonour, or his mistress from disgrace ; but truth must be told, far from being the faithful steward that his master believed him to be, he was a mixture of baseness and dishonesty—Time had blanched his head, but his heart remained as black as ever. In his master, from the time of his coming of age, he had found the dupe of his artifices ; the victim of his chicanery ; and when Harbottle married, Hollis felt that a mistress of the house would be a check upon his spoiliations and misdoings. A prudent housekeeper, selected by an aunt of Mrs. Harbottle’s, was placed in charge of the establishment, and although the wasteful liberality, or rather reckless ostentation of her husband, experienced no great reduction by her

exertions, yet method and order had, in some degree, been introduced into the establishment; and when alone with him, abstracted from parties and visitors, Fanny's mild and cheering influence, which he thought it manly and spirited to deny and ridicule before strangers, won him to habits of regularity and an attention to his expenditure, which, lavish as it was, was at least reducible to account, a circumstance which, while Hollis reigned with absolute power, never had occurred; and, then again, whenever she was able to interpose her persuasion between his desire to buy, at the recommendation of his favourite servant, objects which, like his pastille-burning dragons, and his duck-mounted bagatelle-board, were neither useful nor ornamental, she applied herself to do so, securing a solid satisfaction for her husband, at the price of a rooted and inveterate hatred from his creature.

In the whole heart and disposition of Fanny, there was nothing that was not kind and amiable, affectionate and charitable. She had lost her mother so early in life as to be unconscious of the bereavement, and had been educated under the care of an aunt, the sister of her father; and, when chance threw Harbottle in her

way, she was every thing that man could seek or desire in a wife ; modest and unaffected, accomplished and beautiful ; gay without levity, and sensitively alive to every right feeling without the slightest particle of prudery, her countenance, animated with intelligence and ever-varying expression, was the index of a genuine, pure, and unsophisticated mind. In her manners there was a winning sweetness, an inherent gracefulness, which courts may improve but cannot give, and while the joyous smile of harmless pleasure played on her dimpled cheeks, there was ever beaming round her, the pure radiancy of virtue to sanctify her beauty.

And this was the being whose happiness, whose fame, whose very existence perhaps was to be endangered by the malicious insinuations of a demon in human shape—scarce that—not because he felt anxious for either his master's honour or happiness, but in order if he could, to overthrow the regularity of his establishment, and bring back the chaos which had, in other days, produced such profitable results to him, and out of which he now proposed to realize a handsome competence for a ragamuffin son and a tawdry daughter.

This worthy domestic had long been seeking some opportunity to poison his master's mind, and the innocent playfulness of Fanny's disposition, misconstrued by the low and vicious imagination of Hollis into something like levity and impropriety, induced him constantly to watch her actions, in hopes of fastening upon her, some indiscretion of sufficient importance to awaken his master's doubts; for he had cunning enough to understand, at least one of the minds with which he had to deal, and he knew that if once he could lead the Squire to suspect, in the slightest degree, the rest of the game would be easily played, by his own violence of temper, which if it led to no other consequences would, in all probability, bring about a separation between him and his lady; but the sneaking spy had watched in vain, and listened fruitlessly—nothing could he discover in the conduct or character of his mistress which malice could misrepresent into impropriety, until, like music to his attentive ears, did he hear his lady's maid detail the history of the note of which she had been the bearer from Charles.

This little episode in the family history, to

which a most unjust colouring had been given, by the flippancy of Mrs. Devon, was quite sufficient, as the first stone of his fabric, and as if the evil genius of poor Fanny had been at work against her, he happened accidentally—really accidentally—to be passing through the room in which she and Charles took refuge from the “seekers,” in their innocent game, and merely stopped to see what might happen when he found them run in. What he then heard made a valuable addition to the scanty supply of matter for impeachment, already in his possession, and furnished ample materials for the first story, which he intended to raise upon his slender foundation.

When Harbottle returned to the house and met his assembled friends at the breakfast table, his anxiety to know if he had really misconducted himself seriously towards Lady Frances, was rather whetted than allayed by the observations of Hollis upon their separation in the evening. Mrs. Harbottle, as the ingenuous servant had said, was not present at the party, and could, therefore, give him but little consolation; but Snagthorpe, who had attended them to the door, and escorted Miss Lovell to

the carriage, afforded him some information which was any thing but satisfactory.

“ I must admit,” said the sporting Snagthorpe, “ that you did certainly hit her ladyship hard—you talked to her of the vanity of birth, and the vice of pride. How the conversation took that particular turn I do not presume to know—so it was—and when she was telling us the history of something that had occurred at a party in London, you told her that a large party seemed to you to be a general combination of a vast number of people to make each other uncomfortable, and ended by saying, that nobody but a fool or a pickpocket could enjoy a crowd.”

“ Ah,” said Harbottle, “ but as her ladyship is neither a pickpocket nor a fool, that could not offend her. Ha ! ha ! ”

“ But then,” continued the jovial sportsman, “ you told her that Miss Lovell, the Parson's daughter, was too good for her son, the Captain ; and you believed, after she had rejected Mr. Harvey for his sake, that her ladyship had packed him off to his quality friends to be kept out of harm's way.”

“ The deuce I did,” echoed the Squire ; “ did

you hear me say *that* Charles?" Ha! ha! ha!

"No," replied Harvey, "I—was not in the hall at the time."

"And what said she in return?" said the Squire.

"Why," continued Snagthorpe, feeling his details extremely well received by the party, who were convulsed with laughter, during the shewing up; "why, her ladyship said, that if Miss Lovell had given up Mr. Harvey for her son's sake, there *was* a lady of your acquaintance who did not seem inclined to give him up for anybody's sake.

"Why, what did she mean?" said Harbottle.

It was a "merry jest," a "righte pleasaunte conceite." Poor Snagthorpe, though jocose, never fancied, as how indeed should he, what Lady Frances really and maliciously meant, for certainly the particularly reserved conduct of Charles and Fanny towards each other since the arrival of the new visiters, was very unlikely to lead him to suspect that the mistress of the house was actually the object of her noble guest's attack.

“What does she mean, Charles,” said Harbottle.

Charles acted chameleon to perfection, and varied his colour prodigiously.—Fanny turned crimson.

“I, I can’t think,” said Charles.

“Do you know any of his secrets Fan,” said the Squire to his wife, who luckily was sitting with her back to the light.

“Oh not I,”—replied she.

“She could not mean Miss Eaglesfield,” said the Squire to himself.—“A lady of *my* acquaintance. I’ll go after breakfast to have it out with her. Ha! ha! ha! and what said poor Emma all this time?—upon my life I never will drink punch after supper again. Ha! ha! ha!”

“Mr. Harvey,” said Miss Snagthorpe, who thought it necessary to play her part in the slipslop conversation, “must surely be conscious who the devoted damsel is.”

“I am not aware,” said Harvey, “I assure you.”

“I don’t care a fig about Lady Frances,” said Harbottle; “to be sure there was no necessity for affronting her; but I am sorry about

poor Emma, because I know it will vex her, and though she did throw you over Charles, ——”

“ Upon my word,” said Mrs. Snagthorpe, the fox-hunter’s pretty little delicate wife, “ you really are too bad Mr. Harbottle ; if there is any truth in your story, you should spare Mr. Harvey, and if none, you should spare the young lady.”

“ Oh,” said Charles, “ I am proof against his raillery. I admit every thing, which is the surest way of avoiding discussion.”

“ No, you don’t,” said Miss Snagthorpe. “ You deny your knowledge of the lady of Mr. Harbottle’s acquaintance, who is not disposed to give you up for any body.”

Never did this Patagonian Miss seem half so frightful to Fanny or to Charles as when she brought this little bit of satire to bear.

“ I find,” said Charles, “ when the ladies declare war against me, I have no safety but in flight.”

Saying which he rose from the table,—so did Snagthorpe and one or two others who had finished their breakfast. Harbottle, with a certain degree of good nature, into which he had been brought by a consciousness of his misbeha-

viour the night before, walked up to his wife's chair, and in a tone of endearment half whispered in her ear, "What do you think Lady Frances really *did* mean about Charles?"

"How should I be able to tell?" said Fanny, who felt her cheeks burn and her heart ache, as she condescended so to equivocate in an answer to her husband, as that she might avoid telling a falsehood while she yet denied the truth.

"Well, Mrs. Snagthorpe," cried Harbottle, turning from Fanny, quite satisfied with her ignorance, "to-day Fanny will take you over and shew you the fishing cottage I have built, and we will order luncheon there—and you shall go in the britscka—Snagthorpe, you and I will ride—who goes in the phaeton?—Harvey, drive some of the ladies, that is, if your ravenous invisible will permit you.—Ha! ha! ha! I think you'll like my britscka, Mrs. Snagthorpe—Hobson—completest carriage in the world—cost me a mint of money—but as I say, what does it signify?—Ha! ha! ha! However, I must go down to the Parsonage, make my peace with Emma, and call at Dale Cottage, have it out with my lady, and ask her here again to dinner."

“Indeed,” said Fanny, “Mr. Harbottle, I think you had better not invite her again: in all probability she will decline seeing you if what they tell us happened, really did occur; and at all events, I don’t think the friends now with us are exactly suited to her; and, besides—”

“Psha! nonsense!” said Harbottle; “not suited to her!—if my dinners, and my carriages, and my comforts are suited to her, my company is suited to her. I shall break her into *my* ways.”

“I would much rather she did not come,” said Fanny, who for reasons which she could not divulge, felt the strongest anxiety not again to be thrown into the society of one who, professing kindness, and friendship, and affection for her, could, in a moment of irritation, however savagely excited, evince to her husband a suspicion of the impropriety of her conduct, in a declaration which, however groundless in fact, clearly established two points—one, that her ladyship believed her dear friend actually guilty; and the other, that so believing, she did not hesitate to betray her on the first colourable opportunity.

“ *I would rather she should come,*” said the Squire. “ I do not choose my friends to suppose that I am to be whistled on and off like a dog, by these beggarly lords and ladies—Come she shall—I am vexed about Emma—but I shall press her to come too——”

“ I fear it will be difficult to succeed in your invitation to her,” said Fanny, “ after your declaration with respect to her position relatively to Captain Sheringham. I suspect enough must have passed in their way home last night between her, poor girl, and the Captain’s mother, to render it little desirable to either party to meet again. Feelings like hers cannot so easily be soothed——”

“ Feelings !” exclaimed the Squire snapping his fingers, “ fiddledee about feelings—depend upon it in this world the only way to get on, is to put your feelings in your pocket, and the less room there is in it to stow them away there, the better.”

“ You do yourself injustice,” said Fanny ; “ your feelings are just as strong as any body’s.”

“ I grant you, Fan,” replied the husband, “ when I am put upon—sneered at—ridiculed

—injured—deceived—that I can feel and pretty sharply too ; but I should think myself a great fool to care about what is said between friends, as I call all of us here—hard words break no bones—do they, Tom !—Ha ! ha ! ha !”

These last words were accompanied by a tremendous slap on the back of our sporting friend Snagthorpe, which made him stagger again.

“ No—no,” cried the astounded Nimrod ; “ but hard thumps do, Harbottle.”

Fanny followed her inexorable husband, and kept entreating him not to persevere in his invitation to Lady Frances—but in vain. If she came she anticipated all that she should have to undergo beyond her own private feelings as regarded her ladyship's suspicions and malignity. Constant references to Harvey and his incognita favourite would lead to accusations and vindications intended to be jocose, but which would be daggers to her, and would in all probability betray Harvey (who was no match for Lady Frances) into some dilemma which might end in the most serious results.

The die, however, was cast, and nothing could save poor Fanny from the rack which was pre-

paring for her but the wounded pride of Lady Frances ; and from a closer acquaintance with her ladyship, Mrs. Harbottle began to believe that in spite of the dignified tone which she had assumed on her first arrival at Binford, her magnificence had so far adapted itself to circumstances, that she preferred the luxuries of the Hall, gratis, to the delicacies of the cottage even at a small charge ; indeed it appeared by her words and actions, that although she did not hesitate to make war upon her neighbours on the slightest provocation, one of the leading principles of her tactics was that of foraging upon the enemy. The difficulty of the case to Fanny was this :—immediately after breakfast they were to start on the expedition to the Fishing Cottage, and Harbottle, who was first going to the Rectory and Dale Cottage, was to join them there. They would not meet before their departure on the excursion, and she could not therefore know whether the Squire's invitation was accepted or not, until it was too late to make any arrangements to avoid its effects.

She had resolved in her own mind that if it were, she could not support the presence of Harvey during her ladyship's visit — she fore-

saw all the consequences of his being of the party—the next day he was positively to go to London—she determined if she could ascertain Lady Frances's answer to be in the affirmative, to beg him at all events, and at the hazard even of affronting Harbottle, to take his departure that afternoon before dinner. But then, her wish upon that point must be expressed to Charles himself; therefore before they quitted the Hall on their trip, she sought him in the breakfast parlour—he had left it—she looked into the conservatory—he was not there—she lingered, hesitated—she could not make up her mind to get ready for her departure, until she had secured his absence from dinner.

Harbottle was now actually gone—no time was to be lost—the carriages were coming round—Fanny crossed the hall—the library door was open—she looked in, and there saw the object at once of her search and of her avoidance. He had entered the room by a door at the other end of it, which led again into the drawing-rooms, and was passing through it. When he saw her, and in quest of him, Harvey started.

“For heaven's sake, Charles,” said she, “lis-

ten a moment. You know what Lady Frances said last night—*he* is gone to invite her here to dinner to-day—hear me—if she came, and you were here, I should die—cruel, deceitful woman! What I have to ask—” Here fear, anxiety, and a thousand other feelings almost stopped her utterance.

“ Speak, Fanny”—said Charles—“ direct me how to act.”

“ You are to go to-morrow,” continued she, not much less affected than he evidently was; “ that is your promise to *him*, not to me. You were pledged to go yesterday—let me entreat of you go to-day—go—make any excuse—leave a note—do not see him—you will be overpersuaded—God forgive me—I think I shall die—go—I could not endure your presence—you could not bear the jests and follies which they would commit—I am convinced we should betray ourselves——”

WE !!!

“ If the struggle kills me, it shall be done,” said Charles : “ you see me no more.”

“ Heaven bless you,” said Fanny. “ Farewell, then—no—no—no—Hush, I hear them

coming—let me go this way—my eyes will betray me—farewell, Charles—farewell ; once more God bless you !”

She rushed from him to the other door, which was ajar ; she pushed it open to pass out, and discovered—Hollis listening.

CHAPTER X.

——— “ If powers divine
Behold our human actions (as they do)
I doubt not then, but innocence shall make
False accusation blush, and tyranny
Tremble at patience. You, my lord, best know
Who least will seem to do so ; my past life
Hath been as innocent, as chaste, as true,
As I am now unhappy.”

SHAKSPEARE.

AND what may have happened in the meanwhile to our excellent young friend Captain George Augustus Frederick Sheringham, who, it seems, had suddenly adopted the rarely used manœuvre in English nauticals, of running away.

To be deceived by a girl of the world, with whom a man has been playing the same game as herself, and to be defeated in a running fight

of flirtation, or outwitted in a case of coquetry, may be unpleasant at the moment, because being deceived and defeated in any thing is far from agreeable; but the pang is a thousand times more severe when the object of our affections happens to be such a being as Emma Lovell. The retiring modesty of manner, the soul-fraught tenderness of feeling, the gentleness of expression, the excellence of purpose, and the purity of thought which distinguish such a being amidst a thousand, seem so many sureties for sincerity and truth.

To be discarded by such a one as this, is the bitterest of all human mortifications, because either a man has been deceived wilfully by her original assumption of appearances, which were but superficial, or she has discovered something in his character and qualities so much at variance with what could be acceptable to such a being (supposing her sincere), as to have induced her upon acquaintance and reflection to withdraw herself from an intimacy for which at first she had no disinclination.

That Emma was attached to Harvey, Sheringham had no doubt—that their conversation in the conservatory had ended in her acceptance

of his offer he was equally certain ; first, from having seen him *planté* at breakfast at her father's the next morning ; secondly, from her message, openly delivered to him by a common footman ; and, thirdly, by their manner and earnestness, in the walk which they subsequently took to the Hall, after his departure from the Parsonage.

It would be impossible to describe the sort of ebullition by which the gallant Captain's heart and mind were agitated in his saunter homewards. He walked slowly for one minute—rapidly for two—then he would stop—some tree, some bush, some stile, some object which he passed, brought to his recollection a word—a look—a smile of Emma—aye, a smile—for she *had* smiled on him “ many a time and oft ” as they had walked along that very path—then he doubted—then he feared—then he defied—laughed at his own weakness, and whistled ; as if, like Othello, he could—

“ Whistle her off, and let her down the wind
To prey at fortune.”

But that humour lasted only for a moment—he stopped—stamped on the ground with vexa-

tion and anger. Should he call out Harvey? Why?—she had favoured—had accepted him. Should he see—propose to her—he never had done so, and had no more right to her affections, nor hold over them, than any other of the gallant commanders in his majesty's royal navy—why did he complain then of her preference of Charles—if he so much dreaded the result, why had he not anticipated his offer? He would go back—he would speak to her father—he would do something on the instant that should decide the point. He turned hesitatingly round to put this scheme into execution, when he beheld Miss Emma Lovell leaning on the arm of Mr. Charles Harvey, proceeding by the nearest way from the Parsonage to the park-gates, leaning, too, with a decided pressure of one arm, while, with the other, she appeared to be enforcing by action some argument of importance, with the strongest energy and emphasis, while he appeared to receive her observations with marked attention, animated by occasional gestures, indicative of avowals and protestations.

Away went all his resolutions; for all the hopes on which those resolutions were founded

were by this horrid vision blighted—it was too clear—the thing was settled, and nothing remained for him but instantly to quit the scene of his delusion and defeat.—Knowing, however, exactly the turn of his Lady Mother's mind, more especially with respect to his matrimonial proceedings, and still more especially with his proceedings connected with this particular speculation, he resolved to attribute his departure to some other cause, which he should state in a note to her ladyship, and “cut and run,” without leaving her any clue by which she might discover the place of his destination, so that he might for the present avoid any of those lectures upon morals, manners, and matrimony, which her ladyship was much in the habit of writing upon certain sheets of shining musk-smelling wove paper, and dispatching to him sometimes hebdomadally and at other times even diurnally.

This resolution taken, the Captain ordered his servant to pack a portmanteau, and forthwith betook himself on foot to the turning by the Binford finger-post, where having waited some twenty minutes, he was picked up by a London coach, in which (having sent his man

back), he and his portmanteau were speedily bestowed.

But while we are bound to relate the progress of the flying lover, it is equally our duty to cast one glance upon her whom he had left—left under an impression—hastily, yet not altogether harshly formed—of her falsehood and heartlessness. Painful and agitating as his sudden departure, so caused, was to Sheringham, what were its effects upon *him*, compared with those which it produced upon Emma!

Man, proud man, as he may well be called, as far as human pride is concerned, loves—fondly, devotedly loves; his days are occupied by thoughts of her whom he adores—his nights, when not sleepless, are passed in dreams of her: but then, his occupations—the toils of business, practice at the bar, attendance in Parliament, politics, if a statesman—war, if a soldier—his pursuits, if professional—his diversified amusements, if a sportsman—society—wine—cards, dice—all these excitements are at hand, and as choice or necessity leads or draws him to their adoption, each is acceptable and accepted—but a woman, who loves—a being like Emma,

who had never loved before—whose whole mind, whose pursuits, whose thoughts, whose sentiments, whose character are propertied by the one, one engrossing passion, is—how differently is she placed !

Never was being more exemplary than she of whom I speak. Her constant attention to the wants and sorrows of her father's poor parishioners—her schools—her little housewifery, by which the means of the cottagers' family were to be increased during the winter months ; her anxiety and readiness to forward and support whatever could be advantageous for the helpless infant or the aged sufferer were—not unequalled—for, praise be to Heaven, there are many like her—but they were warm and energetic, far beyond that which common observers would expect from a being so mild, so modest, so gentle and so unassuming.

In those, it is true, she found a constant resource ; and as the almoner of her excellent father's bounty, her mornings were regularly passed, previously to her almost daily visits to Fanny. Once only had the uniformity of her visits to the poor been interrupted ; once only had she failed in inquiring after the health and

comfort of her pensioners—and that once, was on the morning after Sheringham abruptly left Binford, and after the conversation which passed in the carriage between her and Lady Frances.

Lady Frances, who, up to the moment the Squire volunteered his remarks upon her son's absence, really had no suspicion how very much Emma was concerned in his going, was by the observations Harbottle made (coupled with the agitated expression of Miss Lovell's countenance) satisfied that there actually *was* a connexion between the Captain's departure and the young lady's apparent coldness on the preceding evening. Her game, therefore, was to be played—brief as the time allowed her was—during the *trajet* from the Hall to the Rectory; (her ladyship insisting upon setting Miss Lovell down before the carriage took *her* home; although the ordinary course would have been, Dale Cottage first, Parsonage next)—and accordingly she began her skirmishing before they had left the Park.

“What an extraordinary creature Mr. Harbottle is,” said her ladyship, “isn't he, my dear?”

“He certainly *is* very odd,” said Miss Lovell, “but at this time of the evening, nobody accustomed to his society, ought to mind what he says.”

“Why,” said her ladyship, “to tell you the truth, my love, I never do, at any time ; if I did, I never should enter his house after once leaving it : there are such strange persons in the world, that it is really necessary to accommodate our feelings and sentiments to the things we meet in society ; but I am sure that you, like myself, are quite *au fait* upon such matters, and regard the idle babbling of men, particularly those who indulge in that horrible and now exploded vice of drinking, as mere nonsense.”

“I assure you Lady Frances,” said Emma, “that I very much regret to see the odious habit of which you speak, gain, rather than decrease, with Mr. Harbottle.”

“Why,” continued her ladyship, “it really is a matter of very little importance to me what people do, if they have just enough method in their madness not to involve *other* people. Now my poor son, Captain Sheringham, whose name he so coarsely coupled with yours—

you know that sort of thing is quite unpardonable. The fact is—of course you will not mention this, my dear Miss Lovell—George *is* gone to London upon particular business. I don't choose to submit all my family history to Mr. Harbottle, and therefore I affected ignorance of his movements: but the real truth is, as you must see. George—I don't mean to say that he has any very great chance of a peerage, because there are two or three between him and the title in his poor dear father's family—but there it is. Well—then you know with my connexions, and the sincere affection which my brother, Lord Pevensey, has always evinced for him; and, indeed, I may say his own personal claims, it *is* natural, that, wishing as I know he does wish, to marry, he should be anxious to mix a little more than he can here in his own immediate sphere.—I am sure he is extremely happy at Binford; and, as a son, I have every possible reason to praise and admire him; and I know, that in any settlement for life *my* wish would be a command with him. But still you see, my love, he feels himself buried in this sort of place; and as there *is* a person—of course all this is *entre nous*—to whom he has been almost since child-

hood attached, he thinks that an opportunity has offered of pressing his suit in that quarter, which may to be sure be rejected—heaven knows—but *that* he has in confidence explained to me to be the cause of his sudden flight.”

“We shall miss him very much,” said Emma, “in our little excursions.”—It was lucky it was dark, and that the lamps of the carriage, like those of all good carriages, threw no light inwards.

“I,” said Lady Frances, who never in the whole course of her acquaintance with Emma had spoken one half so much before,—“I confess—but that of course, my dear child, is also in confidence—I expect his *projet* to come to nothing; for, amiable and excellent, and I *may* add, noble, as dear Catharine is—Catharine is her name—she has nothing in the way of fortune—absolutely nothing;—and, of course, poor George, who has himself nothing in the world but his half-pay, cannot afford to marry a girl without fortune; and, what I grieve at most is, that if Pevensey, or some of them, do not make a little struggle now, the poor dear girl will be so unhappy—for she dotes upon him—and,” added her ladyship, as

the carriage drove in to the Rectory gate, "I happen to know that he is just as fond of *her*."

They stopped at the house: Lady Frances took leave of Emma with the most affectionate tenderness; bid her take care not to risk her safety by putting her "dear foot" into a little puddle before the door: "wrap yourself up, my love" *i. e.* in stepping out of the carriage into the hall. "Good bye, dear, remember me kindly to papa,"—and so on—and thence her ladyship proceeded to Dale Cottage.

Oh! if these plotters could but really comprehend how very short a way their efforts go against a mind like Emma Lovell's, they would save themselves all the trouble of what I believe Miss Edgeworth calls "Policising." (If I am wrong in the word, I have to apologize to that admirable authoress, for I use it only from memory.) Poor Lady Frances, painted and pencilled, and petrified with horror at the insight into her own family affairs, afforded by Harbottle, threw herself back in the carriage, after she had parted with her companion, and dipped her double-chin in her swan's-down boa, perfectly satisfied that she had utterly confounded the "Parson's daughter."

“ I have settled *that* young lady’s business,” thought her ladyship ; “ I had not much time to do it in, but done it I have. Poor dear child, what with patronizing her, and coaxing her, and frightening her, she will never think more of my George Augustus Frederick.” Of whom, by the way, her ladyship felt an inveterate anxiety to know something herself.

Emma, unused to the world and to worldly things, was endued with an inherent good sense, which more particularly, more entirely belongs to women than to men, and which taught her to consider the facts and opinions expressed by Lady Frances in the dark, as near to truth as her ladyship’s curls and complexion were in the daylight near to nature. Genuine straightforward principle, impose upon it as you will, must eventually come out bright and pure. Emma had seen Lady Frances, in the glare of lamps and candles, candidly avow her ignorance of Sheringham’s destination. She knew *that* to be truth. Was she, with a mind like hers, likely to be deceived by a second edition of this history, evidently prepared after the occurrence of a conversation which, however disagreeable to her ladyship, was infinitely more painful to

Emma? Not she. She looked back on the dialogue, or rather monologue in the carriage, with but one feeling—pity for her companion, who, not only in contradiction of facts established, but in direct opposition to the candid declarations of George himself, had uttered falsehoods, the objects of which (so thinly were they skinned over) were just as evident to Emma as to Lady Frances.

Fanny, during this period, was perhaps suffering as much, if not more, than any of the other personages of this little drama; for, in addition to all her personal feelings of distress and annoyance, connected with what may perhaps be called the main plot, she was distressed beyond measure at the position in which she had placed her innocent friend. It seemed impossible to undeceive Sheringham with respect to Miss Lovell's real feelings, and although Lady Frances's story about "dear Catherine," which, of course, with the rest of the carriage dialogue was repeated by Emma to Fanny at the very first opportunity, might have a very slender foundation, yet it was clear that somebody called Catherine was somehow connected in her mind with her son's settlement in life,

and it was impossible to say what he might be driven to do, in a state of desperation, if he fell again into her society, or the circle in which she moved. The blow once struck—the knot once tied, and Emma's happiness, and perhaps his own, would be for ever blighted.

The greatest change, however, that manifested itself just at this period, was exhibited in the manner and spirits of the Squire; by dint of repetition his faithful Hollis had at last excited in his mind, if not absolute jealousy, at least suspicion; and when Fanny returned, tired, worried, and out of spirits, from the excursion to the fishing cottage, she was conscious that what she had apprehended had come to pass, and that Mr. Hollis, who had been closetted with his master after his arrival, had repeated the disjointed conversation he had overheard in the library, improved upon, most probably, by some fanciful additions of his own.

“ So Fanny,” said the Squire, with a scowling look, which generally portended a storm; “ Mr. Harvey is gone—suddenly—without stopping to say good-bye, or shake hands, or any thing else. He leaves a note to say he must go to London on particular business, and now I hear

that he is *not* gone to London at all ; that he is for the present gone over to Ullsford, and that he is expected to spend a week or ten days at the Mordaunt's."

" Upon my word," said Fanny, " I am not at all aware of his engagements."

" You saw him, I think, before he went, Fan," said the Squire.

" I did."

" Alone in the library ?"

" Yes, alone in the library."

" I thought, perhaps," continued her husband, " you had some particular wish that he should go."

" I *had* a particular wish that he should go," replied Fanny, " he had promised to go before."

" Who did his staying annoy," asked Harbottle.

" The reports which had been circulated about his attachment to Emma, rendered his remaining here injurious to her."

" Why more to-day than a week ago."

" After that long interview in the conservatory," said Fanny, not quite so collectedly as she usually said things.

“ Ah ! that was it. Oh ! and that frightened away the Captain, and now you are making up a match between the Captain and the Parson's daughter.”

“ I do not consider myself making up a match,” said Fanny.

“ Helping it on, though,” said Harbottle ; “ my motto is, never meddle or make in matters like these ; however, I suppose you would rather she should marry *him*, than Harvey.”

“ To *me*,” said Fanny, “ it is, of course, a matter of perfect indifference.”

“ It may be,” said Harbottle, “ but a lady sometimes grows so used to a favourite that she does not like to lose him.”

“ Favourite !” exclaimed Fanny, “ what on earth do you mean ?”

“ Why I mean,” said the Squire, in a tone of the bitterest severity, “ I mean that everybody in the house is talking of your conduct with my ‘ young friend,’ as they call him. Your own maid—your pet maid—Mrs. Devon—Devil I believe would be a better word—talks of his notes to you, and your conversations with him. I have heard it all, Fanny, but I

have affected for *your* sake, to treat the tale with contempt, and threatened those who spoke of it if they ever breathed it to me again, to send them all packing."

"If you had so treated their intelligence because you disbelieved it, rather than in consideration of me," said Fanny, "you would have better deserved my affection. Am I to defend myself against these imputations—am I to explain—am I to humiliate myself?"

"No, no! Fanny," said Harbottle. "The principal part of the history, and which does you the most credit, you have carefully concealed from me. Harvey's going had nothing to do with Emma Lovell. Come, come, no disguise! more people than two may be in a conservatory or in a library, at the same time. I give you credit for all you have done; I should have liked it better if I had been consulted. Kiss me, Fanny! all is forgiven and forgotten, as far as *you* are concerned. But as for my 'young friend,' as my servants call him, who, under the mask of friendship, has made me absurd and contemptible. For *him*"—

— "Dearest William!" said Fanny, who knew how terrible his revenge would be, if

permitted to have free play; “listen to me: you say you have treated your informants—spies upon my words and actions—as such persons should be treated, and declared your utter disbelief in all their histories for *my* sake, is it not clear—consult your own judgment, let reason master passion—is it not clear that any steps taken against Mr. Harvey, in a case where, if you consider *him* faulty, *I* cannot be blameless”—

—“Yes, yes,” interrupted Harbottle, “you *are* blameless.”

“But will the world think so, if my name becomes publicly coupled with an object of your avowed hatred and vengeance. If, as you say you do, and as I deserve you should, believe me innocent, and should it be your intention to break off your acquaintance with Mr. Harvey, would it not be better to let the intercourse and intimacy cease, without any open declaration of hostility?”

“Perhaps it might,” said Harbottle, “but then,” continued he, clenching his fist, “he escapes scot-free.”

“Escapes!” said Fanny, “what has he to escape from? what has he done? what act”—

“Come, come, Fan,” interrupted her husband, “I cry peace, but I must not hear him or his conduct defended. For *your* sake”—

“For *my* sake!” exclaimed Fanny; “believe me, if I did not think you were thoroughly and entirely convinced of my innocence, your tenderness or compassion would break my heart—a heart, which God knows, has never entertained a thought derogatory to your honour, or harboured a wish injurious to your happiness. I cannot live under your suspicions; indeed—indeed, it would be greater kindness to kill me at once.”

“Come, come, my poor girl!” said Harbottle, “no crying—no crying. I *do* believe you innocent of any thing wrong. I myself thought Mr. Harvey was getting rather too free and easy, but I was confident in *you*, and troubled my head little about it; but when other people begin to talk, and wink, and nod, and laugh—that I cannot bear.”

“The opportunity of checking any such impertinences, if indeed you can imagine they exist,” said Fanny, “presents itself. Mr. Harvey is gone—let him never return. You parted not in anger, and if you meet—”

“Meet—God forbid that I should meet *him*,” exclaimed Harbottle, with an expression of countenance worthy the hand of Fuseli, “except face to face, at twelve paces distant, a—”

“Oh ! William, William,” said Fanny, “banish such thoughts—he has never deserved your hate.”

“You think not,” said Harbottle, “was his conduct in the library, when you parted, that of a dear friend ? was—”

“Oh pray ! pray William !” sobbed Fanny, “end this painful, dreadful conversation ; acquit me entirely, or discard me totally,—I am conscious of my own rectitude.”

“Do I deny it ?”

“Then for mercy’s sake—for the sake of justice, spare me all these allegations, raked together by persons whose duty would be better pursued to their master by attention to their own services, than by poisoning his mind with details of circumstances of which they can neither comprehend the causes nor effects, and which—”

“Come, come,” interrupted Harbottle, “no preaching, and no running down my servants,

who have for years and years been faithful to me, and to whom I have been before indebted for acts of kindness and affection, which I am very proud of and thankful for. Dry your eyes—I hate to see your eyes look red—and dress for dinner. Let's have no more of this ; it is all over, forgiven and forgotten as far as *you* are concerned, but—”

Fanny knew enough of Harbottle to know the meaning of the last word he uttered. She was convinced that nothing but revenge for what, by the exaggeration of spies, he had been taught to consider Harvey's duplicity, would calm or satisfy him ; and knowing too, as *she* did, that whatever *had* occurred, trivial indeed as it was, had its origin in herself, and had arisen from the best and most scrupulously honourable feelings on both sides, it was natural that the forgiveness of her husband of what, in fact, was no offence, should not release her from an anxiety for another, to whom, as we have already seen, she was sincerely attached as a companion and friend.

Such scenes as this which I have endeavoured faithfully, yet I fear faintly to describe, are not so rare in domestic life as the still unmarried

world may fancy, and yet, with all its little ills and evils, man knows no happiness until he marries. Let him possess a woman, of sense and virtue, and of whom he himself is worthy, and he will feel a solid and permanent joy, of which he never was before sensible. "For," as somebody says, "the happiness of marriage, like the interest of money, arises from a regular and established fund, while unmarried libertines live upon the principal, and so become bankrupts in character and respectability."

To be sure, (as indeed the same authority tells us), "Uninterrupted happiness no man can or ought to expect. Life is no sinecure; fruits do not now spring spontaneously from the earth as they did in the garden, nor does manna drop from the clouds as it did in the wilderness." But, as a scheme of solid comfort, matrimony affords to well regulated minds a double share of pleasure in prosperity, and a solace and support in sorrow and adversity.

The assembled party at Binford "needed no ghost" to tell them that there had been a family storm during the interval between their return and dinner, even if the swollen eyes of their hostess, and the forced smiles which,

strange to say, the angry frowns of her husband drove her to assume, had not sufficiently proclaimed the fact; the ladies' maids had communicated each to her mistress the outlines of the domestic history; for Devon, although in some sort attached to Mrs. Harbottle, was too vain of being trusted, ever to keep a secret, arguing somewhat logically that a secret is of no use in the world if one may not tell it; and, therefore, in the plenitude of her knowledge, and in the exercise of her natural communicativeness, she had mentioned to Mrs. Snagthorpe's and Mrs. Dempster's soubrettes what she knew *was to happen* when her master returned; because Mr. Hollis had forewarned *her* of the course he was about to pursue, in order to put her upon her guard if she should be questioned by the Squire about the note which Harvey sent; Hollis believing her to have a sufficient quantity of the inherent spirit of intrigue, mingled with a certain degree of affection for her mistress in her composition, to induce her to deny, in the most positive manner, ever having carried (or even seen) a *billet* from Mr. Harvey to Mrs. Harbottle.

The caution of Hollis might lead the speculative reader into the belief that, in the midst

of all his mischievous proceedings, he had some feeling towards Mrs. Devon, which induced him to let her into his confidence just as far as was necessary to prevent her committing herself in a falsehood, and being—as he was convinced she would be by his irascible master—kicked into the street on the instant of her detection. Upon this point, knowing little, we say less.

To describe the sort of evening which was passed after this scene, would be to recount the duration of dullness, from the time dinner was served till the ladies retired. Fanny made her excuses, and left them early. Harbottle drank much, and talked much, and even laughed much, but the demon of revenge was lurking in his heart, and when he reeled up stairs to bed, his deepest regrets were occasioned by thinking that Harvey was beyond the reach of his immediate chastizement. He sat himself down in his dressing-room, his temples throbbed, and his eyes swam in his head; he unlocked his pistol-case, he poised one of the deadly weapons in his hand, raised it, then dashed it upon the table with an oath, as if in despair that Charles was at the moment beyond the range of its bullet. He

recurred to all his hospitality, his friendship, his intimacy with Harvey : recalled to his recollection all the proofs which Harvey had seemed to give of affection and friendship for *him* ; turned over in his mind the numberless incidents which had occurred, in which he and Fanny had been engaged together—all such thoughts and recollections being heightened and exaggerated by the effects of the wine he had swallowed.

To hunt down the miscreant whom he thought had stung him—to call him out—to shoot him if he could, were the objects of his present anxiety ; but the certainty that such a measure would give publicity to his suspicious—to his shame, perhaps—checked his sanguinary desires. He could not endure to become the mark for ridicule or pity, as a dishonoured husband, and in this struggle between the baser passion for revenge and the more venial feeling of vanity, the distracted man consumed the greater part of the night, and when at last he laid his head upon his pillow, sobered by reflection, and saddened by suspicion, he fell into a fitful slumber, from which he awoke next morning as little refreshed in body as he was relieved in mind.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Oh, my hard fate ! why did I trust her ever ;
What story is not full of woman's falsehood ?
The sex is all a sea of wide destruction ;
We are vent'rous barks, that leave our home,
For those sure dangers which their smiles conceal.”

LEE.

RETURN we now to Captain Sheringham, whose expedition to the metropolis in some degree resembled that of Cadmus, who being sent off by his father Agenor to pursue his sister Europa, happened to be struck with the beauty of a particular situation, and stopped to build the city of Thebes on his way. Sheringham, bound to London, and resolved upon cutting the thread, if not of the fates, at least of his connexion with the fickle Emma Lovell, began to feel his animosity, like the courage of Sheri-

dan's Acres, "oosing out at his finger's ends" during the first ten miles of his progress.

It was not, perhaps, that his doubts had so speedily abated, or that the impression which what he had seen, had made, was fading from his mind, at a rate so rapid as to entirely alter his views and feelings, but it was the certainty, in his present humour, if it lasted, that he should take some decisive measure upon his arrival in town, which would utterly and for ever shut the door against any explanation, and terminate irrevocably all further intercourse with the only being for whom he had ever felt a sincere and devoted affection, which induced this modification of his passion. The faint glimmering of hope—and a small spark it was—that in spite of appearances she was not the faithless creature he feared her to be, increased gradually as the distance between them lengthened, and when he reached Ullsford, he ventured to stay his flight; and, if he were not like Cadmus, disposed to found a city, at least he felt a powerful inclination to indulge himself by building a few castles.

According to this plan he resolved to ensconce himself in the best inn at that excellent market

town, and write by the night's mail back to his lady mother, informing her of his halt, and begging to hear from her by return of post ; thinking, by this proposition, with which he was quite sure she would agree, to hear something relating to the politics of Binford, which might serve to throw a light upon his own particular affair, being at the moment decidedly of opinion that the *denouement* of Emma's acceptance of Harvey was at hand, and that, in all probability, that very day would be selected for its announcement.

Having written his letter, the unhappy Captain ordered his dinner ; for he was not one of those sighing swains “ Who,”—the proverb says—why, nobody has ever exactly ascertained—“ live on love, as larks on leeks,” but on the contrary, held that the diseases of the mind were rather allayed than excited by the refreshment of the body ; and while the repast was preparing, he took a stroll about the town.

There *had* been times when the sight of the well-curled damsels, standing at the shop doors, or working, or seeming to work, behind their counters, would have excited his attention at

least : the library, half-filled as it was, with the best of the neighbours, would once have drawn him into its gay vortex ; and the promenade, at the end of the town, called there the esplanade, had his heart been at ease, and his mind in tune, would have charmed him, so thronged was it, with pretty people, all looking as fresh and gay as none but English-women ever look by daylight. All these he now gazed at with lack-lustre eye, and bent his solitary way to the church-yard, where he lingered and loitered, reading epitaphs and watching grave-diggers, till it was time, as he thought, to return to his hostelry.

There are periods of a man's existence, when being left alone—all entirely alone, is very delightful—this evening was one of those in Sheringham's life—he could have been happy in no society but Emma's, and *that* he was not destined to enjoy. All conversation but her's would have tormented him to death—alone, he could think of her and of her falsehood, without fear of interruption ; and after dinner, while sipping his wine, and reading the “ Ladies Magazine for 1789 and 1790,” adorned with plates of distinguished persons, “ He ever

and anon" lifted his eyes from the book to the ceiling, as he came to passages in the pleasing little romances of those days, under the titles of "Eloise, or the Delicate Distress,"—"Jacintha, or the Cruel Uncle,"—"Henry, or the Stray Lamb," &c., which he could, by the force of ingenuity, twist into an application to his own unfortunate case; and in this state of vegetation he remained until about ten o'clock, when, at about the period at which a London afternoon begins, he betook himself to rest—or at least to horizontal reflection—for so fixed were his thoughts upon his false fair-one, that up, or in bed, his cogitations were the same, the only difference being in the attitude which he chose his body to assume.

The post arrived in the morning; no letter from Lady Frances in answer to his, which she must have received early in the preceding evening, and quite in time to reply to it—what was the meaning of that—was she ill—or would she not write? In answer to the questions which the Captain put to the waiters at the inn, and subsequently to the post-master's daughter, he found no solution of the mystery of the non-arrival of her dispatch. His mo-

ther was an excellent correspondent, she loved writing, and did nothing else all the morning long than cover sheet after sheet of paper, not only with lines horizontal, but lines perpendicular, and lines diagonal, so that no possible spot or corner of her letters should escape unwritten on. She could not surely be unwell—but if she were, she knew by his letter where to address him ; and supposing her illness sudden, as it must have been, and so serious that she could not herself write, her maid might have acted as secretary for the home department for once. He was, however, greatly annoyed by the failure of the intelligence, and resolved upon going back himself to Binford, by that night's mail, if something did not turn up in the course of the day. He would then get there by night—neither would his eyes be pained with the sight of Harvey and Emma taking the “ walk of the affianced,” nor would they enjoy the triumph of beholding the defeated and discarded lover moping in solitary sadness under the spreading yew trees, which shelter the walk from the Rectory to the church.—That scheme was selected, and another day of agreeable single-blessedness was before him.

He lengthened his walk upon this occasion, and enjoyed his own thoughts uninterruptedly in a stroll for upwards of five hours; having returned from which, and finding no news from his lady mother, he again proceeded to the worldly pursuit of dining.

As he passed to his sitting room, a man whom he recognized as Harvey's servant, Evans, touched his hat to him in the passage—Sheringham was startled. What brought *him* here? a spy, perhaps.—To ask after his master whom of all other people upon earth, he hated most and least wished to see, would be absurd, and yet—what should he do?—at the moment he did nothing but pass on—the waiter followed—of *him* he inquired if Mr. Harvey was in the house?—yes—he had just arrived.

“This,” thought George Frederick Augustus, “is deucedly provoking. What can have brought him here?”—“Is Mr. Harvey alone?” said the Captain.

“Yes, Sir,” said the waiter, “he sleeps here to night, and has ordered horses to-morrow for his britcska to Mr. Mordaunt's.

“Oh,” said Sheringham, “he is not going back to Binford?”

“ No, Sir.”

“ That’s odd,” thought the Captain, “ that now is very odd—I don’t see why I should quarrel with him—we parted good friends—never spoke so civilly since we knew each other, as we did when we separated at the Parsonage—if he is not going to Binford—eh—how is it—let me see, she cannot have jilted *him too*—one down another come on? No, no, that cannot be—but then, the conservatory—the breakfast—the walk—these are so many “ handkerchiefs which the Egyptian did to my mother give”—are they all trifles, light as air?—but then, *he* is here—Emma there—*she* is not coming away, *he* is not going back. Oh, let me break the ice—let me overcome suspicion—let us either fight or be friends. Hang it, one way or another it must end.”

At the conclusion of this soliloquy, he gave the bell a tremendous pull, and at his bidding the waiter stood before him.

“ Has Mr. Harvey ordered dinner?”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ Is he come down?”

“ No, Sir.”

“ Where is his servant?”

“ Here, Sir.”

Evans appeared.

“ When did Mr. Harvey leave Binford ?”
said the Captain.

“ About half-past two, Sir,” said Evans.

“ He is going to Mr. Mordaunt’s ?”

“ Yes, Sir, to-morrow.”

“ Does he return soon to Binford ?”

“ I think not, Sir ;” said Evans ; and in saying it, George, who was watching him like an Old Bailey counsel, saw an expression in his countenance, which he vainly endeavoured to suppress, and which meant more than the simple answer seemed to convey.

“ Come away suddenly—eh ?” said George.

“ Very, Sir,” said Evans.

“ I wish—I wish,” said Sheringham, “ you would go to your master—make my compliments, and say that I am here alone ; and that if he will do me the favour to join me at dinner, I shall be too happy.”

“ I will, Sir.”

Away went Evans.—This was curious—a triumphant lover would not leave his prize thus—what could it mean—was he in despair—had he been beaten—rejected—deceived—it was

quite a case of sympathy—Harvey's answer in the affirmative was couched in the most friendly terms, and Evans was directed to order the people to blend the dinners—another case of sympathy—the same soup—broiled whittings—a roast fowl and egg sauce—an omelette *aux herbes fines*, and a tart, had been ordered by both the gentlemen; four whittings instead of two, two fowls instead of one, and so on in progression, accordingly appeared, and shortly after entered Charles Harvey himself.

When he came into the room he affected a gaiety which Sheringham in an instant saw was forced—he was delighted to see it—and instantly shook hands with the man whom an hour before he considered as his deadliest foe, with the greatest cordiality.

“You dont look well, Harvey,” said Sheringham.

“I am not well at all,” replied Harvey, “but pray may I inquire what on earth took you so suddenly from Binford, and what on earth brings you here.”

“Sympathy, I suppose,” said Sheringham, “for your own questions echoed, would be those most suitable to my inquiries about *you*.”

“ I am here,” said Harvey, “ *malgré moi*—I am going to the Mordaunts.”

“ You had not long fixed that visit,” said Sheringham.

“ It depended entirely on my stay at Harbottle’s,” replied Charles, “ I promised whenever I left Binford, to go to Marchlands.”

“ I had no idea that you were going to leave Binford so soon.”

“ I did intend coming away the day before yesterday,” said Harvey, “ but the Squire would insist upon my stopping. I wish I had not been persuaded to stay. I saw Miss Lovell just as I left the village this afternoon—looking handsomer than ever.”

“ The devil you did,” *thought* the Captain. “ I wish you had kept that fact to yourself, at least till we had dined.”

“ Lady Frances,” continued Charles, “ I did not see; she dined with us yesterday at the the Hall; and I am afraid Harbottle was excessively rude. I know from the conversation at breakfast this morning, that poor Emma Lovell was made excessively uncomfortable by his allusions.”

“ Miss Lovell, too,” said Sheringham, “ his allusions—oh ! ”—

“ About *you*,” said Harvey.

“ Me ! ” —

At this crisis, when the Captain was wound up to a pitch of excitement and expectation, which nobody not chin deep in love can properly estimate, the door of the room flew open, and the master of the George appeared at the head of his waiters, bearing the Siamesed repast for the two disconsolate lovers. The noise the men made in putting the things down, rattled through the brains of the friends, for such they now seemed destined to be, and by the time the Yahoos, who invariably couple noise with smartness, had, in their slap-dash manner, arranged the table and placed the chairs for the guests, they each wished the meal over in order to get rid of the incumbrance of the attendants, in whose presence it was, of course, impossible to touch upon the subject nearest their hearts.

The meeting between these two young gentlemen was curious ; the circumstances were such, and so peculiar that they produced in

the course of the evening from Harvey what perhaps nothing else upon earth could have extracted from his bosom, the confession of a fervent, deep-rooted, and unalterable attachment for Fanny.

“ Indeed, indeed,” said Harvey, “ if any human being had told me that, living as I have been with Harbottle, it was possible I should have allowed passion so far to gain the mastery of reason, of principle, and of honour, I would have felled him to the earth. Unconsciously and unwittingly did I entangle myself in this fatal attachment. Not one word of love has ever passed my lips, not one thought has ever crossed my mind, which I would have disowned or disguised even from her husband ; but, Sheringham, the moment came when I was undeceived ; she painted her own unhappy circumstances to me ; she said little ; but then it was, and then for the first time, I knew, I loved her. All I have explained to you about my long conversations with that most amiable of beings, Miss Lovell, rather added than diminished my affections. An appeal was made to my feelings to my honour, to save her—save her from what—George ?—was not this a confession that my

fatal passion was in some degree reciprocated?

“My dear friend,” said Sheringham, “you must not agitate yourself thus; you have acted honourably and wisely; time and reflection and reason will overcome this—and—”

“Preach, Sheringham, preach,” said Charles; “but recollect, that the preacher is most efficient who acts up to his doctrines—had your Emma (for *yours she is*, rely upon it, heart and soul)—been torn from you, or had you quitted her under the impression that you never were again to see her, what would you have done——”

“Why, my dear friend,” said George, “precisely what *I have been doing* for the last four-and-twenty hours, and you should console yourself with the reflection that, however much *you* suffer, the object of your ill-fated attachment is safe—safe beyond the reach of pain or calumny.”

“True, so she is,” answered Charles, “but what a blank is my existence now. Where shall I find solace, where dissipate regrets of which I never anticipated the depth or extent, until forced to endure them. Travelling—

travelling, must be my resource. On the continent, through scenes unconnected with any recollections of her, I may perhaps be tormented into other thoughts. But for life the feeling lasts, here—here, in my heart.”

“ I thought,” said Sheringham, “ when I first met you at Harbottle’s, that you entertained rather a favourable opinion of the lady of the house, and I must admit that I also thought her opinion of you was not much less favourable ; but one sees so very much of that sort of family compact in the general run of society, that I, who make a point of never interfering where I think my officiousness might be superfluous, thought no more about it ; but I declare to you that, the greatest surprise your confidential communication has created on my mind, is, the fact that the *denouement* of the affair, is a thing of only a few days old.”

“ Ah, Sheringham,” said Harvey, “ you do not know what an admirable creature that woman is—what, in point of fact she suffers, and how she bears her sufferings ; but never mind, leave me to a course of sorrow which I deserve, and of repentance which I

need.—As you justly say, thank God ! she is safe and blameless ; and in that recollection I am comparatively happy even in my misery. You have a brighter prospect before you, and so has Emma, for although in point of fortune she may all her life as you say, be poor, she will marry the man she loves and who is calculated to make her happy.”

“ But my dear fellow,” said Sheringham, who, having received from Harvey all the particulars of his interviews with Miss Lovell, all the causes of their conversations and meetings had, become the gayest of the gay, and above all, most anxious to console and enliven his companion. “ You really are forerunning my expectations. I have no assurance, but your word, that Emma Lovell cares one single sixpence about me. I have, like you, never spoken of love ; she has never expressed any thing but good-nature and kindness, and at those luncheons——”

“ Ah,” said and sighed Charles Harvey. “ Those fatal fascinating meetings—now terminated !”

“ Well terminated for all parties,” said George. “ No sorrow—hope—hope Charles.”

“Where am I to look for hope—for comfort.”

“Time and patience,” continued the Captain, “are required to soothe us in all great calamities; but rely upon it—”

Here entered a waiter with a small brown paper parcel, directed to Captain Sheringham, R.N. George Inn, Ullsford, per Swannington coach. It was a letter from Lady Frances, thus enveloped innocently to defraud the general post-office and secure the receipt of its contents that evening, her ladyship having, from some cause “yet unexplained,” missed the day’s post—as ladies with a large correspondence sometimes do.

The seal broken, the packthread cut, George read as follows:—

Dale Cottage, Aug. 30, 1830.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I cannot describe to you the pain and agitation I suffered from your sudden and most unexpected disappearance, and I assure you the mortification I have undergone since, upon account of your flight, has, in no small degree, encreased the effects of that uneasiness. I have had Popjoy with me, and have taken an ocean

of camphor julep and some other horrid messes which he has sent me. I of course gave him Halford's prescription, which, as usual, brought me round a little, and your kind and affectionate letter, has for the present effected my cure.

I had, last night when I came home, made up my mind, certainly if you did not return, never to visit the Harbottles again; his rudeness is beyond endurance, and under the influence of constant intoxication in the evening, he throws off every thing like restraint or a regard for the common decencies of society. The people who are staying with them are, a horrid wooden-headed looking man, with red cheeks and a black bristly head, whose name I have never been able yet to pronounce, with a mawkish pale faced dawdle of a wife, drest after the prints in the magazines, and a sister who, upon my word, is not presentable anywhere. Then there is an old lawyer (Dumps I think they call him) as deaf as a post, and as rude as a bear, with a prim starched better half, who talks slip slop more admirably than the Lady in the Rivals; when speaking of an open heath she talks of a dissolute situation in the country; and while Mrs. Harbottle, who really knows something, was

speaking of the arts, she volunteered her opinion that “statutes were nasty things, but that of pictures she had always heard the most beautiful that ever was painted was the *Anno Domini* of Apelles.”

“At such things as these I could laugh if I had any body to laugh with me, but the people who are here, of course, see nothing ridiculous in their own absurdities or those of their companions, and sit round the room in sober sadness, and fancy *that* society.

“What put me in a serious passion with Mr. Harbottle were some very coarse allusions about you and the Parson's daughter, and *that* too in her presence; now really a joke, if joke it may be considered, at the expense of two people when absent, is all very well; but while the poor creature was present, filling her head with notions which could only end in disappointment to her, was too outrageous; and when the Squire said that she had given up Mr. Harvey for your sake, I really was in such a passion as to tell him, that upon that subject he had better look nearer home, for that there was a lady of his acquaintance who did not seem disposed to give up Mr. Harvey for any body.

“ This morning the Squire called upon me full of apologies for what he had been told had offended me. He appeared to recollect nothing of the matter himself, but some of his odious friends had, at breakfast, recalled to his memory my observation about young Harvey ; and you cannot imagine what I suffered between the stupidity of the man himself, and my own anxiety not to be mixed up in any of their quarrels or grievances. When he insisted, jocularly, of course, upon my telling him who the lady was who was so devoted to Charles, as he called him. I could say nothing, but advised him to try and find out, which I should not have done if I had imagined he had the least chance of succeeding in his scrutiny. He insisted upon my dining with them to-day, to shew that I was not offended, and as I could not, in this place plead any other engagement, I am going fully prepared for the frowns of the lady, who, I have no doubt, will erroneously attribute what I said in a moment of irritation to annoy him, some little tittle-tattle desire of shewing *her* up, which I declare to have been the farthest thing in the world from my intentions.

“ I, however, took the opportunity of this *tête-*

à-tête with the Squire to set him right upon the subject of Miss Lovell. I had indeed in the course of our drive homewards from the Hall talked *at* her, in describing the sort of person I should like you to marry, and I believe from the tone of voice in which she replied, for I could not see the expression of her countenance, that I completed the affair entirely—gave her hopes the *coup de grace*, and prepared her for woe and willows; but it struck me, as I know Mrs. Harbottle, to be her chief—indeed only—friend and confidante, that it would be wise to instill into the thing which Mr. Harbottle calls his mind, the conviction that any serious connexion with the Lovells had never entered your head. I represented you as I think you merit, full of vivacity and general admiration for nice and pretty people, with a turn for flirting, and accomplishments exactly suited to the indulgence of the pursuit—be that as it may, I made them understand, that you have no more idea of connecting yourself with the Parson's daughter than the Pope has, nor much more right than his holiness to think of such a thing. That being yourself without fortune, you certainly could only marry with money, and that, therefore, putting all *the*

other impossibilities out of the question, you certainly could not—even if you wished it,—which I am sure you did not, marry such a person as the poor little girl whose head I am really afraid you have turned. Having charged the Squire with all these views and intentions, I dispatched him to his wife to make a confidence, and was not at all ill pleased that he proposed taking the Rectory in his way to join “the ladies” in some excursion to his fishing-house, which has cost him more money than fishing-house ever cost, and is not yet half finished.

“I was so extremely unwell that I could not write in time for to-day’s post, and I therefore have ordered them to forward this by the coach ; and one of my principal reasons for regretting my inability to write sooner is, that I am *extremely* anxious you should go to Somerfield. I wish you to cultivate the acquaintance of Catherine. She is an amiable creature, and though somewhat older than yourself, so superior, and with such an understanding and such a heart,—and I dare say you will jokingly add,—and such a fortune ; but there you will do me an injustice ; I feel certainly, as I told Mr. Harbottle,

that you ought not to marry without money, but that is a totally different thing from marrying for money. There are as lovely and as excellent young women, rich, as there are poor, and although I have no desire to spoil you, and perhaps see you with a mother's eye, I do really think, considering your personal qualifications, and the circumstances of your birth, and connexions on both sides, that you are fully entitled to aspire to the union of beauty and wealth, in the lady with whom you link your fate and fortune. A woman's heart is always disinterested; a rich girl is as easily won as a poor one; it is true, friends and relations may in the one instance thwart, while in the other, they would encourage a successful termination to your suit; but as far as the being herself is concerned, I have known the world a long time, and I never knew a rich girl think of her riches, except as affording the means of making *him* happy whose happiness it was her anxiety to make.

“ You must be aware, dear George, that in advising you to proceed, and not return to this place, I make a great personal sacrifice; indeed, I shall quit it very shortly myself. I

am so entangled with these oppressive people, and their inevitable hospitality, that I am *généé* to death, and the horrid monsters who compose the rest of the population, are so detestable to me, that I cannot make up my mind to get off of the invitations to the Hall, by mixing in the other parties of the place.

To-morrow comes partridge shooting, and the recurrence of that day brings forcibly to my mind all the festivities at Grimsbury, and the joyous meetings in which my poor dear father, and my venerable grandfather before him, took so much delight. All these things are changed, and here am I destined, I conclude, to pass the anniversary of that once really happy day in the society of the Harbottles and their extraordinary companions. However, do not disturb your arrangements for me, and let me hear from you as soon as you reach town. I will furnish you with a periodical account of our proceedings here; not but that I think, if I kept a diary for your edification, I might detail the events of Monday at the beginning of each week, and put ditto, ditto, ditto, to every succeeding day until Monday came again.

Do not fail to write to me; and believe me,
dearest George, your affectionate mother,

FRANCES SHERINGHAM.

P. S. Popjoy has just been here. He tells me, he was sent for, this morning to see Miss Lovell, whom he found extremely unwell. Poor thing, I have no doubt her indisposition proceeds from the enlightenment she received last night from me. However George, the days when ladies died for love are past, and I really think, as indeed I told Popjoy, that his assistant who is a remarkably smart, red and white young gentleman would, in the shape of a husband, be of more service to her than all the physic in his shop. There is nothing like putting notions into young men's heads. I am quite sure, Popjoy will tell the lad what I said, and I am not much less sure, that I shall get up a flirtation between them."

This letter and postscript came most opportunely, or rather inopportunely—opportunely to open Sheringham's eyes, as to his lady mother's manœuvrings, and inopportunely as far as their success was involved. They however corroborated, if they had needed corro-

boration all the assertions and statements of Harvey, as to his entire innocence of either attachment or offer to Miss Lovell; for her ladyship in her anxiety to exhibit the success of her conversation with Emma, had, in point of fact admitted, that the object of her affections was George himself; and this she—the woman of the world—sits down and writes to him, as a probable means of inducing him to relinquish the girl, whose head he had turned, and of proceeding to Somerfield, to conclude a match with “Catherine.”

That her ladyship had over-reached herself in this proceeding is clear; but it must be admitted in vindication of her policy, that she did not believe in the existence of a serious attachment to Emma, on the part of her son. His sudden departure she could not exactly account for; but such had been the bye-play of the parties concerned, whilst under her ladyship's *surveillance*, that what she really thought, and what she did not in the slightest degree allude to, was, that George had started off in a fit of jealousy with Harvey, whom she considered his rival in the good graces of Mrs. Harbottle. Upon that point, therefore, she

never touched farther than to record her belief of Harvey's success in that quarter, because she was just as anxious that her son should not entangle himself in any scrape with the lady of the Hall, as that he should be in any degree committed to her of the Parsonage—all she desired was, that he should not return to Binford, and when she had sealed the letter, we have just read, she thought she had decided that question finally and entirely.

The effect produced, however, was precisely the reverse of that which was expected. Sheringham had quitted his home distracted with jealousy, and convinced of the destruction of all the hopes of happiness to which his acquaintance with Emma had given birth; he was then so far from being assured of her sympathy, that before his eyes, as he believed, he had evidence of her indifference towards him; for even in the depths of his distress, he could not bring himself to imagine, that she could have willingly and wilfully played the deceiver's part; he therefore concluded, that she had always preferred Harvey, whom she had known so much longer, and attributed to his

own vanity, the impression he had taken of her partiality.

But now, Harvey's visit and Lady Frances's letter had cleared up all his doubts; he had *not* misconstrued the artless manner of the amiable girl; she was even now suffering, perhaps, from his absence, coupled with the cruel explanation of his mother;—there was not a moment to doubt what his course should be—he was resolved to return to Binford in the evening of the following day, to proceed direct to the Parsonage, and there put it beyond the power of his mother to influence the abandonment of his purpose, by proposing to his beloved Emma, and under the sanction of her excellent and exemplary parent, plighting her his faith and truth.

His intention was to take this step before he saw Lady Frances. He had a double motive for adopting this course. He should, in the first place, avoid any discussion with her, (for if he saw her, he felt he should be compelled to communicate his intentions to her;) and in the second place, if,—and there is no certainty in love,—Emma *should* refuse him,

or her father decline his consent to her marriage under the circumstances, he could then effect his retreat from the village, without incurring, in addition to all other evils, the ridicule and exultation of his noble parent, which she would, no doubt, triumphantly bring into play against him in case of his defeat.

To Charles Harvey, the Captain, of course communicated his design, who agreed in its prudence and propriety ; but it was not without a sigh that the unhappy Charles thought again of Binford, and all that it contained—its pleasures and amusements, never to be enjoyed by him again, and the society so dear, in which again Sheringham might rejoice, but in which he must never more hope to mingle.

Sheringham saw what was passing in Harvey's mind—the sad contrast between the dawning hopes of future joys for his friend, and the dark clouds closing in upon the setting sun of his happiness.

“ Rally, rally, my dear fellow,” said Sheringham,—“ you will hereafter rejoice in the step you have taken—no medicine is palatable ; you have swallowed the bitter potion, and you will in time recover ; if you had ventured

to stand your ground, you might have been beaten ; you fly, and will not be overtaken ;—Religion, reason, honour, all point out to you the wisdom and propriety of your conduct, and you must not relax.”

“I am firm, Sheringham,” replied Harvey, “but more astonished at the real state of my heart and feelings, then I can describe to you ; I admit, that during my acquaintance and constant association with her, I admired her understanding, her virtue, her feelings, and I became attached to her—devotedly attached as a brother—as a friend. By degrees I observed the coarseness and indelicacy of Harbottle in her presence. I have often seen with pain the blush mantling on her cheeks at expressions or allusions of his. I could not but lament her destiny, and pity her distress ; but all these feelings were pure and disinterested ; nor till I was forced from her presence, had I an idea of the intensity of my affection, or of its ardour and devoted character.”

“How well then and wisely has *she* acted,” said Sheringham, “she saw the danger to which *you* were blind, and like a guardian

angel, has interposed herself to save you from destruction."

Harvey who seemed perfectly bewildered at the discovery of the real state of his heart, was not exactly in the humour to agree with all his friend's propositions ; propositions, perhaps, not the more acceptable from being made by a lover at the very crisis of happiness, to a wretched outcast, driven from the scenes in which alone he loved to dwell.

The friends, however, agreed to remain together till the following afternoon, when Sheringham was to proceed to Binford to put his plan in execution, and Harvey to fulfil his engagement at the Mordaunts.

CHAPTER XII.

—————. “The fatal shock
Has doubtless shivered her strong side, she sinks
So swiftly down, that scarce the straining eye
Can trace her tattered mast.—Where is she now?
Hid in the wild abyss with all her crew,
All lost for ever.”

MALLETT.

WHILE the two friends are waiting at Ullsford, preparatory to the execution of their different designs, let us for a moment look into Miss Lovell's boudoir, where, at about twelve o'clock of the day, we shall find her and Mrs. Harbottle closeted together.

“My sufferings,” said Fanny, “are indeed more aggravated than I anticipated. My husband's conduct to me is such, as would be little less than I deserved, if I had failed in any one

duty towards him. Oh, Emma, conceive last night, his upbraiding me about Charles before Lady Frances, after all that had passed in the afternoon, and after assuring me that he acquitted me of all participation in what he so cruelly called his misconduct."

"Is it possible?" said Emma.

"Truth;—not only did he refer to *my* partiality to Harvey, but exultingly proclaimed to Lady Frances that he had now found out whom she meant by a particular friend of his, who seemed not disposed to give up Mr. Harvey to any body. If it were possible for me to repent of having acted rightly, and done my duty rigidly, his conduct and language would induce me to regret that I took the decisive step I felt it right to take, with regard to poor Charles."

"The unnatural league," said Emma, "which has been formed between Mr. Harbottle and Lady Frances (who hate each other, I am sure), is most dreadful; for he, in the evening, has no scruple as to language; and her ladyship, who has no tie to any of us, and came here for nothing but to amuse herself at our expense, at the least possible expense to herself, encourages him in his discussions without in-

tending to do so: for though he is *your* husband, Fanny, you will, I am sure, admit that there are times and seasons when he does not exactly comprehend the meanings and intentions of his associates."

"Emma, he *is* my husband," said Fanny, "and that must serve for answer. That he has faults and imperfections, I am not so blind as not to know; but those I could cheerfully endure—have cheerfully endured, and would make any sacrifice to insure his happiness, and support his respectability, but to endure cruelty—undeserved cruelty,—caused, too, by the malice of his menials, who are now set to watch me, and report to him, upon his return home, as to what I have done,—where I have been,—what letters I have written, what orders I have given, is indeed a trial.—I will, however, submit.—I pray to Heaven to grant me patience—and, with its blessing, I will continue my straight course, even if my poor heart break in the effort."

"Pray, pray," said Emma, "do not agitate yourself thus. Mr. Harbottle will overcome this wayward humour, and——"

"No, Emma, no," interrupted Fanny, "I know his disposition too intimately to hope *that*,

his mind never divests itself of an impression once received—let him make what declarations he may, let him assure me, however earnestly, that he either has no suspicion of my misconduct, or that he has forgiven and forgotten my indiscretion altogether,—it is not so ; if he were to live for ages, his feelings towards Harvey would remain unchanged, unmitigated ; and one of my consolations in sorrow is, that I forced him away before the arts and insinuations of the people by whom I am surrounded, had entirely alarmed his jealousy. Besides, to be watched—mis-trusted—doubted—oh, Emma, Emma, you *can* have no conception of my unhappiness.”

“ Believe in my warmest sympathy,” said Emma ; “ I know what it is to be wretched myself.”

“ Ah, dear girl,” said Fanny, “ and you may well and justly believe that all my own miseries are aggravated by a conviction, that the plan which I adopted of soliciting your interference with Charles, has so sadly interfered with your happiness.”

“ Perhaps,” replied Miss Lovell, “ it is all for the best ; it is quite evident, that even if George Sheringham should feel sufficiently interested

about me to return after his delusion is past — and it must surely be dissipated, after he hears of his imaginary rival's departure — I should have no chance of happiness. What Lady Frances said, in our drive home the night before last, was, I felt, intended to kill every hope I might entertain ; and certainly, much as I own to you I admire and esteem her son, I never could consent to be admitted into her family against her wish, or looked upon as an intruder into a circle to move in which I have no ambition."

" Nevertheless, Emma," said Fanny, " my belief is, that if Captain Sheringham were to present himself before you, and, after announcing his mother's disapprobation of the match, propose marrying you without her consent, you would——"

" Do not suppose anything," said Emma ; " I have lived the life of a recluse until twenty-one ; for the last four years I have made the happiness, as he says, of my dear father. I am unused to the world, and as yet, I believe, unspoiled by its ways. George Sheringham has attached me to him without any forced effort on his part ; I knew and admired him for his

principles, his talents, his accomplishments, his good nature, and his agreeable conversation. He is the first and only man who ever made that sort of impression upon my heart or mind; and, if I lose his affection and his society, he will have no successor in either."

"Dear Emma," said Mrs. Harbottle, forgetting her own griefs for the moment, in the delight of hearing any thing so new and *naive*, "make no rash vows; my belief is, that Captain Sheringham will be here very shortly—for, after all, it seems he has not gone to London. Lady Frances affects great mystery about the place of his present residence; but I suspect, from something she inadvertently let slip last night, that he is still very near us; and that, if her endeavours to keep you asunder fail, which I hope and trust they may, he will be here before many days are over."

In this supposition, as we know, Mrs. Harbottle evinced her usual discrimination into the human mind, as far as the gallant Captain's intentions were concerned; but, agreeable as female society is, we must leave the ladies to themselves for a short time, in order to take

another glance at the Siamese willow-wearers at Ullsford.

At breakfast these knights-errant met again, to talk of themselves, for, as I have elsewhere observed, egotism is the leading characteristic of the lover,—himself, his mistress, his hopes and views, his happiness and misery, form the sole subjects of his conversation. They had, however, so far exhausted the theme the night before, that they were enabled to divide their attention between their own personal grievances, and the grilled fowl, and the eggs, and the ham, and the coffee, and the London paper of the previous day, which Harvey undertook to skim for the benefit of his friend, who was performing the operation, which, at Cambridge, is not called by so gentle a term as tea-making, but which, in point of fact, amounts to neither more nor less.

Charles, accordingly, recited aloud several “we hear’s,” some few “we understand’s,” and many extraordinary falsehoods of which “we are credibly informed,” all of which passed unheeded over the tympanum of Captain George, until, at length, he proceeded to read the following—

“Extract of a letter from Malta, dated July 27.

“ We have been greatly shocked by a dreadful accident which has happened to an English nobleman and his family, who have been staying here for some time. On Monday last, his lordship, together with his lady, two sons and a daughter, proceeded on board his lordship's yacht, in which he came from England. The full complement of his men were on board, and they proceeded on a cruise, such as they were in the habit of taking daily. It appears that the weather changed very unfavourably in the middle of the day, and towards the afternoon the wind blew with uncommon severity. Accustomed to the sea, and confident in his crew, his lordship felt no alarm; and having plenty of provisions on board, they resolved to stand off from the island, and make the best of it for the night. The weather getting much worse as it grew late, and a heavy sea running, his lordship ordered his captain to let the yacht run away before the wind, under a close reefed square top-sail. The night was pitch dark, and, about half past eleven o'clock, she unfortunately came in contact with a large ship close hauled, which struck

her just amid-ships, and in one instant, accompanied with a shriek of horror, the ill-fated vessel sunk, with every soul on board.

“ Robert Halsey and George Pytts, two of the crew, are the only persons saved; the force of the concussion was such, that the bowsprit of the yacht was torn out of the step, together with several feet of the bulwarks, and part of the cutwater, to which the bob-stay was made fast. Upon this raft, so providentially supplied, the poor fellows floated until morning, when they were fortunately seen by Captain Sale, of the brig *Florentia*, from Liverpool to this port, who got them safely on board, supplied them with every comfort, and brought them to Valletta.

“ The survivors describe the ship which caused their misfortune to be a large black sided vessel of about three hundred and fifty tons burthen; but the night was so dark, that, of course, in the confusion of the minute, they had neither time nor opportunity to make out what she was.

“ The following are the names of the sufferers:—Lord Weybridge and his lady; the Hon. Howard Bouverie Sheringham, his eldest,

the Hon. Spencer Cavendish Russell Sheringham, his second son, and the Hon. Caroline Brandenburgh Sheringham, his lordship's only daughter ; Mr. Thomas Hopkins, captain——”

“ Stop, stop,” said Sheringham ; “ what, in the name of Old Scratch, are you reading about ?”

Harvey, who was unconscious of the title which the head of George's family bore, was going on methodically to enumerate the crew of the vessel who had perished, but, upon the sudden exclamation, he stopped.

“ Why, my dear fellow,” said George, “ you are making this up—this is gibberish of your own, in order to astound me—it won't do, Charles—I rejoice to see your spirits return—but drowning a whole family to give me a peerage is rather too romantic—it is carrying the joke too far—it would not be tolerated even in one of Colburn and Bentley's namby pamby novels.—Ha ! ha ! ha !”

“ Upon my honour it is here,” said Charles. “ What !” cried the Captain, “ dispose of a whole family of Sheringhams as you would of a litter of blind puppies.”

“ Look there,” continued Harvey.

And he did look, and notwithstanding that he saw it all in black and white, and that it bore the stamp of authenticity, which to the unenlightened mind is always conferred upon a falsehood by appearing in a newspaper, he could not bring himself to believe that so extraordinary an event could have occurred, which should at one fell swoop, dispose of all these people, and place him in a situation which three months before was so far out of his reach as in the ordinary course of mortal events to appear unattainable.

“By Jove,” said George, “but it looks like truth. No man could sit down and furbish up the facts and names which appear here without foundation. What ought I to do?”

“Why,” said Harvey, “as I never unexpectedly succeeded to a peerage, I don’t feel competent to advise; but you will hear more of it of course. You had better start for Dale Cottage directly.”

“No, Charles, no,” said George; “if the report is false, I should needlessly agitate my mother, and expose myself; if it should be true, it will only be a stronger inducement for me to go to Lovell’s this evening before it is

known; and if Emma accepts me for my own sake alone, a poor half-pay commander in the navy, it will at once secure me from attributing her consent to ambitious, or interested motives, and I, on the other hand, shall have the delight of hailing her Lady Weybridge, with a handsome fortune, and a place in society, which, dear angel, she is fully qualified to fill."

"But," said Charles, "you seem in the most of your anticipations with respect to *her*, to forget your grief for the loss of all your relations."

"Why," replied the Captain, "in the first place I have not quite made up my mind to the truth of the story: and in the next place, if it be true, I never beheld the late lord but once in my life, and that only when I was at Eton, and his half-sovereign tip so affronted me that I never sought or saw him afterwards. My father's elder brother, whose son he is, was never upon good terms with any of us—him I scarcely recollect; he was nearly twenty years older than my father, and the present, or the late lord, if late he be, married an extremely disagreeable person, by whom he had the three children enumerated in the newspaper and two

others who died young. The eldest must be now—or was—fifteen, the second about thirteen, and the girl about eleven. I confess that the accident is a sad one, and I should lament it in any case ; but for the little I have known or seen of my relations, I am not disposed to feel more than I should if it had happened to any body else.”

“ More especially,” said Charles, “ as a coronet falls into the opposite scale.”

“ If the coronet,” replied George, “ should become the fair forehead and blue eyes of my dearest Emma, I should indeed value it, else I declare to you I care little about it. I am, however, decided in my course.”

“ I never saw a fellow bear elevation with such philosophy,” said Harvey ; “ why, my dear George, there are men—aye, dozens of them—who are ready to forswear their principles, their politics, their creed itself, for the sake of the thing which has just dropped upon your brows, and which you receive with perfect indifference.”

“ To tell you the truth,” said Sheringham, “ it is that very readiness, on the one side, to barter honour and honesty for title, and the more

shameful readiness, on the other, to grant it as a political bribe and withhold it, from just and honourable claims, that so far degrade the dignity in my eyes as to make me indifferent to the advantages it may give me in society, while it puts me on a level with a host of adventurers and pretenders, who, in return for their venality and tergiversation, are permitted to be accounted peers of the highest and noblest men in the country."

"Do you consider, my dear friend, or lord," said Charles, "as the case may be, "what a narrow escape of ——"

—— what he was going to add we know not, for on the instant a carriage having been driven up to the door of the inn, which "made the very stones prate at its whereabouts," — the room-door was suddenly opened, and George's servant rushed in, more dead than alive with haste, and presented his master with the following note from Lady Frances, thus addressed:—

"Lord Weybridge,"

&c. &c. &c.

This was conclusive: the black seal (wax sent for, to the Binford "*shop*" express) settled it all.

“Dearest George,—A dreadful event has happened in the family. I trust this will find you still at Ullsford. I have given Roberts orders to follow you if he can trace you. I can explain nothing. Compose your mind, my dearest son. A complication of miseries have befallen your cousin and his family—its importance and extent you may guess by the superscription of this. I have sent the carriage. Come to me instantly. There is much to settle and arrange. I trust you are not gone forward

“Ever your affectionate mother,

“FRANCES SHERINGHAM.”

“Has any body arrived at the cottage, Roberts?” said George to her servant.

“No, *my lord*,” was the answer.

It did not sound so much amiss after all !

“My mother is quite well?”

“Yes, *my lord*.”

George rather liked the reply, and asked another question just for the sake of the answer.

“When did you leave Binford?”

“About half-past nine, *my lord*.”

“Well, order horses, and go back immediately.”

“ Yes, my lord,” said Roberts ; and when he got to the door, turning himself round added inquiringly, “ four, my lord ?”

“ Four ! what on a bowling-green road as flat as a billiard table ? No, a pair, Sir.”

“ Very well, my lord,” said Roberts, evidently much disconcerted at his lordship’s not immediately altering his mode of travelling.”

“ Well, my dear lord,” said Charles, “ let me sincerely congratulate you ; it is clear that your bright hours are beginning, and it will be no little consolation in my unhappiness to hear of your brilliant progress.”

“ I assure you, my dear Harvey,” said Lord Weybridge, “ this accession of rank and fortune—for the fortune is very extensive—has but one effect upon me. I do not in the slightest degree deny, what it would be affectation not to admit—that the position in which I am so suddenly and unexpectedly placed has, as I have already said, considerable advantages in society ; but what I chiefly look to is the increased means it may give me, first, of exhibiting my devotion to that dear girl ; and, next, of employing my means and interest for the advantage of deserving

people, and for the advancement and support of principles which I have always maintained, and which I pledge my honour—I must do no more now—I never will desert for earldom, marquissate, or dukedom.”

“Your lordship’s carriage is ready,” said the master of the George, who appeared in *propiâ personâ*, *bien poudré*, with a large white waistcoat and top-boots. “I hope, my lord,” added the jocund Boniface, “I may be permitted to congratulate your lordship, and to solicit a continuance of the favours which your lordship has been pleased to bestow upon my house.”

“Certainly, certainly,” said George, “I fear my connexions and pursuits will necessarily take me away from your county; but I shall, I have no doubt, be occasionally at Binford, and shall not fail to remember your courtesy and attention.”

The parting of Charles and his now noble friend was extremely cordial. Lord Weybridge apologized for the abruptness of his departure, and promised to write him a succinct account of the state of affairs at Binford, and a faithful report of his proceedings at the

Parsonage, and having shaken hands with his disconsolate companion, stepped into the chariot which was to bear him to all he held dear ; while Harvey, longing and half resolved to accompany him, at least as far as the Binford finger-post, nevertheless conquered his rash inclination, and ordering *his* horses, in half an hour more was on his road to the hospitable home of the Mordaunts.

CHAPTER XIII.

Be thou blest Bertram ! and succeed thy father
In manners as in shape, thy blood and virtue
Contend for empire in thee, and thy goodness
Share with thy birth-right.—

SHAKSPEARE.

THE meeting between Lady Frances and her son was of course most enthusiastic ; her ladyship caught the ennobled George Augustus Frederick in her arms, and, after the fashion observed by corporations to kings, presented at once her addresses of condolence and congratulation, concluding the latter with the use of the somewhat homely adage, that “it is an ill wind that blows nobody good.”

Her ladyship's chief alarm upon the occasion, had been excited by an apprehension that the new lord might be overcome by

the sudden surprise caused by the intelligence of his unexpected accession to the family honours; but she soon found that all her cares upon that point had been superfluous, since the common newspapers had made him acquainted with the event even before the receipt of her letter.

The dispatch which conveyed the news to Lady Frances was written from London by the Reverend Mr. Crabshaw, who had been tutor to the two young Sheringhams, but who, on account of indisposition, had not as usual accompanied them in their excursion on the day of the fatal accident; he stated that he had, upon his arrival in town, visited the late lord's solicitors, in whose hands he knew his lordship to have left a will, and that they—who he presumed would also write to Lady Frances (being, as he himself was, ignorant of her son's address)—were extremely anxious to see his lordship, and that in his (Mr. Crabshaw's) opinion his lordship ought not to lose a moment in proceeding to visit their chambers, as, of course, the unexpected and afflicting event would cause a great change in the actual disposition of the late lord's personal property.

“ You see, my dear George,” said her ladyship, “ you havn’t a moment to lose. What an extraordinary and sudden alteration in your position—from a poor half-pay commander in his Majesty’s navy to a peer of the realm ”

“ True,” said George, “ and if it might be permitted for a sailor to joke upon so melancholy an accident, which has deprived him of a family of cousins, about whom he knew little and cared less, I might certainly boast that I still owe my promotion entirely to the sea—however, I suppose there is no necessity for my immediate departure.”

“ I should say immediate,” said Lady Frances, “ I repeat my conviction that not a moment is to be lost—how do you know who are your cousin’s executors, how do you know but steps may be taken which ought not to be taken without your presence and concurrence: take my advice, my dear George, order horses directly and be off.”

“ Hang it,” said George, “ I have sometimes dreamt, or in my waking dreams, perhaps, fancied myself Lord Weybridge, and I used to think myself a great deal happier in the enjoyment of my visionary title than I do in this

accession to the real one. The change of station will produce a change of scenes and circumstances, and I had begun to like Binford so much——”

“—— that you went away from it in disgust,” interrupted her ladyship, “two days ago; depend upon it, my dear George, when you have tasted the sort of life which this accession to title and wealth will habituate you, you will soon learn to look upon *the circle* in which we have been lately moving, with a mixture of pity and disgust. I don’t mean to deny Mrs. Harbottle her merits, nor to gainsay the virtues of Miss Lovell, but—what are such people as Lovells and Harbottles in the scale of society—what can be more flat, stale, and unprofitable than to live with people highly respectable and vastly good, and very rich and all that, who exist upon surmises and contradictions, when, as you are now qualified to do, a man can mingle in the very scenes of which the amiable middling classes speak only traditionally, and bear a part in transactions, the discussion of which forms the subject of their uncertain conversations. No, no, from this day for-

ward, depend upon it, Binford is no place for you."

"I dont quite see all that, my dear mother," said George." "It is true I am Lord Weybridge, and therefore, nominally, something better sounding than I was yesterday; but my blood, my family, my connexions are all precisely the same; and I am sure of this, that hitherto amongst your associates and companions I have never found any very great favour. Lady Gorgon, your most intimate friend, used, when I went to her house, to drive her daughters out of my way, as a shepherd would his flock from a wolf, and if ever I danced with one of those Lady Janes and Lady Annes, the looks of the duchess during the whole quadrille, were like those of a basilisk."

"Ah, but then——"

"—— then, my dear mother, I was a commander in his Majesty's navy, with the splendid revenue of seven shillings and sixpence per diem, and, therefore, noble as my blood was—and I know you agree with me that it *is* noble on both sides"—added the Captain smiling, "none of your noble acquaintances ever smiled

upon *me*. Here I came to Binford, the same, poor half-pay fish, and found ——”

“ For heaven’s sake, dont talk of what is to be found *here*,” exclaimed her ladyship. “ Go to London and see what you can find *there*.”

“ Oh,” said George, “ I am quite prepared for my reception ; George Sheringham, having cast his skin and burst from the chrysalism of a commander on half-pay into the splendid butterflyism of a barony, will find mothers, and aunts, and dowagers, and chaperones, pressing forward to proffer the sweetest buds and blossoms for him to flutter and flirt withal—but then Lady Frances is it not possible that your ladyship’s son may have sense enough to discriminate between the favour and affection which are bestowed upon him for himself alone, and those which are excited by his title and fortune. Depend upon it, one of the most difficult positions in the world is, that of a young and wealthy nobleman, who, differently placed from men in different circumstances, finds ready access to the homes and hearts of all the beauties of his country. He sees their smile, he hears their praise, he finds himself sought, he feels himself admired.—Where vanity exists not in

an eminent degree, doubt qualifies the pleasure this encouragement inspires, and he immediately begins considering whether he individually, or the title and station he commands, are the objects of attraction. For myself, I honestly confess, I believe there never existed such a thing as an interested *young* woman upon earth—there *may be* ambitious ones, and where the heart is not prepossessed, those might prefer a coroneted lover to one who merely wore a hat—still when a man knows that he is so loved for himself alone——”

“—— well, but my dear George,” said Lady Frances, “as you know no such thing, and as you have thrown over poor Catharine, who, dear soul, really was, I believe, very fond of you *once*. What can you mean?”

“Thrown over Catharine,” said George, “why, my dearest mother, I never knew anything of her affection for me till you urged me, the day before yesterday, to go and renew my acquaintance with her, and I ——”

“Oh, well,” said Lady Frances, “it’s no use talking of Catharine now. It was all mighty well to talk of her yesterday, poor dear thing, but that’s quite at an end now, so let me

beg of you not to lose time in arguing points which will keep for future discussion. Have you ordered the horses?"

"No, no," said George, "I cannot leave Binford without going to take leave of the Harbottles and the Lovells. I will order them at three o'clock, and so travel till late, and be in town by to-morrow noon."

"Surely my dear child," said her ladyship, "you cannot think of calling upon anybody before you go; recollect your loss; so many relations lost at one blow. It would be in the highest degree indelicate."

"My dear mother," said George, "what indelicacy can there be in just——"

"Well, George, if you choose to do such a thing, of course——"

"I do—I assure you," replied George, "they have all been extremely kind to me, and as I cannot exactly fix the time for my returning here, I ——"

"But," said Lady Frances, "you do not seem to recollect that you *had* actually left the place—were absolutely gone, without taking leave of anybody."

"That," said Lord Weybridge, "is pre-

cisely the reason why I am now so anxious to make the *amende honorable*, for so gross a rudeness; so let me order the horses—say at four—and I shall be able to make my little round of visits and then start for the metropolis, of which I have so suddenly become so bright an ornament.”

“As for the Lovells,” said Lady Frances, “a call there, except to leave a ticket, will be useless. The young lady has been recommended a change of air, and they have contrived to lift poor Mr. Lovell into the carriage, and the whole party have betaken themselves to Merrington—where the waters and the company and all the other attractions of the place are supposed likely to be of use, either to him, or his daughter, or his sister, or some of them. I was surprised to hear of their movement, but they went this morning.”

“Well then,” said George, who, truth to be told, rather doubted the history. “I can do a civil thing without much difficulty or waste of time. The Harbottles are here I conclude, for they have friends staying with them.”

“They are here,” said Lady Frances, “but their friends, I rather think, have left them.”

“ Well then, I’ll be off on my tour of civility,” said George, “ and be back long before the carriage is ready. You have no intention of coming up to town immediately, have you?”

“ Not unless I am wanted,” replied her ladyship. “ If I can be of any use, of course you will send for me—but till my mourning is ready and all that sort of thing, I otherwise shall not quit the cottage.”

Away went Lord Weybridge to fulfil his self-incurred engagements, and away went Lady Frances to write circular letters with deep black edges to everybody whom she imagined could be interested in the events which had occurred—events which, for more reasons than those which ambition might supply, were, in point of fact, momentous to her, in the highest degree, as far as her comfort was concerned ; for, upon an enumeration of the costs and expenses of furniture and fitting-up—calculated not upon the bills, for they had not yet been sent in, but upon the estimates—which made the matter worse,—she found that she had so very far exceeded her original intentions, as everybody does who begins altering and decorating, that her income for three consecutive

years would not, if all appropriated to the purposes of payment, meet the charge ; so that in addition to the honour and dignity which had accrued to her son, and was thence reflected back upon herself, the supply of *argent comptant* which his accession to the estates as well as title of his late cousin would secure, was a happy relief for which she was really and sincerely grateful to Providence, lamenting at the same time with every decent feeling of regret, the calamitous event by which her circumstances were so very much and suddenly improved.

Lord Weybridge, after having given directions to his servant about the post-horses, proceeded direct to the Parsonage ; where he found that the history which his lady mother had given him was but too correct. Mr. Lovell, alarmed by the sudden indisposition of his daughter, had quitted Binford for the watering-place specified by Lady Frances ; not more, as the servant told George, on account of the change of air, but for the purpose of obtaining the advice of a celebrated provincial physician, who was resident there.

From the Parsonage, George proceeded to the

Hall, revolving in his mind the scene he had last seen enacted in the very path where Harvey and his beloved Emma passed him ; and at the same time considering how he should shape his conduct, so as to put beyond any future doubt or contingency, his attachment and devotion to the lovely and exemplary girl. From the tenour of his confidential conversations with Harvey, he was inclined to anticipate any thing rather than an agreeable interview with the Harbottles. He hoped that he might encounter them singly : but even then he felt how much delicacy he must necessarily observe with her, if he admitted that Charles and he had met ; which, for many reasons, he intended to do.

He was fortunate in his approach. The Squire was out, but expected shortly in—Mrs. Harbottle was at home, and received him with her usual warmth and sweetness of manner ; but, (certainly without anticipating who had been his companion for the last twenty-four hours,) there was a consciousness of something on her mind, apparent in her expressive countenance, which, might have been a dread lest George should inquire after Charles Harvey.

The viper Hollis knew already, from George's man, that Charles and he had been staying together at Ullsford.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Harbottle, "that the intimate friends of Captain Sheringham must not venture to be so intimate with Lord Weybridge."

"So," said George, "my fame and title have preceded me, have they? My dear mother seems to have taken as much pains as the gazette writers, to proclaim my style and title. You, my dear Mrs. Harbottle, may depend upon it, that if I were to become Emperor of all the Russias, instead of an humble English baron—for which title his imperial majesty, I dare say, has the most sovereign contempt—I should never forget the hospitality and kindness which I have experienced in this house, nor the many very very happy hours I have passed under its roof."

"I regret to tell you," said Mrs. Harbottle, "that one of our once agreeable parties—" and here she paused for a moment—"is, I fear, extremely unwell:—Emma I mean."

"I called at the Parsonage before I came here," said George.

“ Did you ?” said Fanny, her eyes sparkling with joy which she could not conceal. “ Did you, indeed ?”

“ Indeed I did.”

“ I knew it—I knew it,” said Fanny, “ I would have staked my existence that you would, —but Emma, who knows nothing of your elevation—Emma would not have believed me, if I had said so.”

“ Why should she have doubted me ?”

“ Your sudden departure—”

“ —— Charles Harvey—”

“ Oh, for mercy’s sake,” said Fanny, “ don’t speak—he—he has no more thought of Emma—”

“ ——Hush !” said Weybridge “ for heaven’s sake, do not agitate yourself. He and I have been staying together, the last day and a half, at Ullsford, where, luckily for all parties, we met by accident.”

“ With *him*, Captain Sheringham ?” said Fanny.

“ With him ?” replied his *lordship*. “ and he has completed the friendly duty of entirely undeceiving me with respect to those appearances of that particular intimacy between him

and Emma, which cut me to the quick, and drove me from this dear dear village, in which all that I care for on earth exists."

"Not at this moment," said Fanny, "but—pray, how did Charles—Mr. Harvey I mean—prove to your satisfaction that—"

"Ask me no questions," said George. "Satisfy yourself of his honour and mine. Be assured that both of us possess that feeling of devoted friendship towards you, with which, as I firmly believe, nobody, who has seen and known your excellence and virtues as we have, can fail to be inspired. He is an excellent, amiable creature; he has won my regard and esteem in the last days of our acquaintance; and I hope and trust, in spite of all the crosses and losses which man is destined to encounter in life, he will yet be as happy as he deserves."

Lord Weybridge flattered himself that he had got rid of that part of the subject in a skilful manner, without too much exciting Fanny's womanly feelings:—for it is impossible that any woman should divest herself entirely of interest in a man who once has been so dear to her as a friend—but he expected that

those very feelings would have prompted her to make some little—very little—additional inquiries about him. She however, disappointed the peer, and, with a prudence quite philosophical, checked her curiosity upon a subject, to her of more importance than she desired his lordship to consider it.

“ But of Emma Lovell,” said George, after a pause, which he considered quite long enough to give his companion the opportunity of questioning him ; “ tell me sincerely and candidly, when was she attacked by this illness ?”

“ The evening of the day *you* left Binford.”

“ And why, may I ask,” said George, “ do you connect *my* departure in the morning with when *her* indisposition in the afternoon ?”

“ Because that,” said Fanny, “ and a conversation with Lady Frances on their way home, from this, I believe to have been the cause, not perhaps of any serious indisposition, physically speaking, but of an indisposition to stay here, at least for the present.”

“ I have heard of that conversation,” said George, “ but tell me when does she return ?”

“ You are serious in asking ?” said Fanny.

“ Perfectly and entirely serious, my dearest,

best of friends," said George; "I have not a moment to spare here. I start for London almost immediately. I can have no opportunity of seeing her either before, or, I fear, soon after my departure. May I trust—may I entreat you seriously, and from the very bottom of my heart, to beg and implore her to bear me in mind:—tell her, that hurried away as I am, and uncertain of the immediate period of my return, I have made you the depositary of the master-secret of my heart, and tell her, above all, that if she encourages my pretensions, and favours my hopes, no human being in existence shall separate us:—tell her, too, my dear Fanny,—so let me call you in the entirety and purity of our friendship—that the gratitude I feel for her kindness towards me, as the humble unpretending person she first knew me, has made me more anxious to make this declaration, the very first act I perform in my new, and, as the world will consider it, superior character; and I entreat you here, to bear witness for her and for me, that if she consents—I am pledged."

"She *will* consent," said Fanny, whose eyes were filled with tears of pleasure at the happy

result of the acquaintance between Lord Weybridge and her friend; “and I shall be too much rejoiced to send her tidings which I not only know will gladden her heart beyond all others, but which have given me a higher idea of human nature, as far as you particularly, and men generally, are concerned, than I ever had in my life.”

“Why,” said George, somewhat archly, “all men are not exactly alike in their views and feelings.”

“No,” sighed Fanny, “I am aware of that.”

“Aware of what,” said a voice of thunder, which proved to be that of Harbottle himself, who came bouncing into the room, after having, under Hollis’ suggestion, waited a minute or two at the door before he entered. “Why, Sheringham, my boy, how are you, eh?—What’s all this Sheringham,—you are a lord they tell me, eh?—that’s a pretty go!—ha! ha! ha!—plenty o’ money I hope:—a poor lord’s a poor thing;—but I give you joy of your coronet, and wish you health and happiness to wear it.”

“Thank ye, Squire,” said Lord Weybridge;

“I almost despaired of seeing you, for I am just on the move.”

“Oh, to be sure,” said Harbottle, whose fish-like eyes and bloated cheeks denoted that he had eaten luncheon, and was, moreover, out of humour; “the moment I come in, out goes every body else. Well, so you saw Mr. Harvey at Ullsford, eh?”

“Yes,” said Lord Weybridge, “he was there all yesterday with me.”

“Did he tell you any lies about us,” said the Squire.

“William,” said Fanny.

“William,” replied Harbottle; “yes it is William. What is that gentleman stopping at Ullsford for! Did you bring any letter over here from him?”

“My dear Harbottle,” said Lord Weybridge, “I am not a general postman.—Harvey is engaged to the Mordaunts for a day or two and is gone over there.”

“Oh, I thought you,—I beg pardon, your Lordship, I mean—ha! ha! ha!—might have had some message from him for *my* wife. They are very great friends I believe.”

“ Indeed we are,” said Mrs. Harbottle, trying to laugh off the barbarity of her boorish husband’s coarse and barbarous remark, “ and I hope we shall always remain so.”

“ Yes, I dare say you do,” replied the husband.

“ Well,” said Lord Weybridge, “ although I am bound to apologize, I am compelled to take my departure; my lady mother will rate me soundly if I do not attend to my own business, and what she calls the duties of my new station. So adieu, Harbottle, I have just been telling your lady that I never shall forget the kindness I have experienced here, and which I hope to be permitted to enjoy again.”

“ Ah, that’s all mighty well,” said Harbottle, “ but I don’t think we shall see much more of you, nor of Binford. I am sick and tired of every thing. You are a lord; if you turn out to be a rich lord, the chances are you won’t come near *me*, and if you are a poor lord, I shall laugh at *you*. My best days are over, Sheringham. We have had the devil to pay here, and as for your friend—”

“ Oh, pray, spare my friends,” said Lord Weybridge, who anticipated what was likely

to follow ; “ never let us look forward in anticipation of ill—you have every thing man on earth can wish for, and I am going on, they tell me, to a similar fate. As Queen Mary said, when she lost Calais, that she was sure Calais would be found engraven on her heart after her death, so, if I thought I should never return to visit you again, I believe Binford would make an equally deep impression upon mine. Heaven bless you both, be happy as you deserve to be, and, as Hamlet’s ghost says in his evanishing, ‘ remember me.’ ”

George took leave of them both affectionately, but in going down the steps he added, in the ear of Mrs. Harbottle—loudly enough, however, to prevent the Squire from supposing that it was a message from Harvey—“ do not, on any account forget my message to Miss Lovell. Remember, I rely on you.”

Knowing Emma’s feelings upon this most important subject, it was not likely she would.

It is curious to reflect upon the wonderful difference which existed between the immediate pursuits of the three persons at that moment collected, and at that moment separated. Harbottle, reduced by the irritating malevolence of

his spies into a state of mind, distressing beyond measure to himself, and dreadful to his unhappy suffering wife, had brought himself to the adoption of language with respect to Charles Harvey, in his conversations with her, which no company could check and no circumstances controul; and during the whole of that afternoon and evening, although one or two of his congenial neighbours dined with him, he could neither get rid of the suspicion that Lord Weybridge had been the bearer of some message from Charles, or check himself in the frequently recurring expression of that suspicion; so that, what one would think, even if he really believed in the existence of any improper partiality on the part of his wife, it would have been his first object to conceal, *he* himself made the subject of remark at his own table, and of conversation at every other table in the parish. But the truth is, his mind had room but for one idea at a time, he had now got hold of one, and it entirely occupied him.—His judgment never controlled his temper, and to his passions he sacrificed every thing—hence the brutality which his unhappy wife innocently suffered.

“Look upon this picture, and on this,”

George, in the very hey-day of life, full of spirit, vivacity, talent, and accomplishment, was quitting the confined circle of all these domestic evils for the great world, upon which he was to enter the next day, with all the advantages of rank and fortune. It is not quite certain whether this sudden uplifting of the commander, whom Harbottle had been pleased to patronize, had not added to the general acerbity of his manner. George, however, took no offence; he regretted deeply what he saw, for, coupling the severity of the Squire's manner, and the subdued wretchedness of Fanny, with the ardent and strangely excited enthusiasm of Charles Harvey, he could not but anticipate a result the most to be dreaded: nor did he think, in spite of all the young gentleman's protestations, that his lingering about in the neighbourhood,—a fact much dwelt upon by Mr. Hollis—was altogether so indicative of his determination to abandon every idea which could militate against Harbottle's honour, or Fanny's respectability, as the said young gentleman wished it to appear. It seemed to George (and he had seen a "*case*" or two in his life) by the alteration from what the Hall was a

month before, to what it appeared at the moment he ran down the steps at his present departure, that if things went on progressively for another four weeks, as they had gone on, for the four preceding ones, he should have very little chance of running up those steps again, and finding the master and mistress of the house standing together at the top of them to receive him.

It is scarcely possible to describe on the other hand the effect which had been produced upon the spirits of Mrs. Harbottle by the visit of Lord Weybridge, for, although conscience, which makes cowards of us all, had hindered her from making the slightest inquiry after Charles, still, seeing the individual who had been his companion, in fact ever since he had quitted Binford Hall at her earnest solicitation, was something ; but much more was it that the unexpected meeting of the friends at Uilsford should have produced the much desired *éclaircissement* of the apparent frivolity or fickleness of Emma, which otherwise it would have been most difficult to have brought about properly and satisfactorily.

It must be pretty clear to the reader that Fanny was not long before she seated herself in

her boudoir to communicate to her dear suffering friend the whole of Lord Weybridge's declaration, made more striking to the poor innocent girl, by the circumstance of her previous ignorance of his accession to the title. And the task was a relief to her, for she was doomed, unless, indeed, the Squire might have beaten up a recruit or two in the village, to a *tête-a-tête* dinner with her churlish husband.

But even in this innocent, and as it could not fail to be to her, agreeable pursuit, she was forced to gratify her anxiety to despatch the welcome intelligence to her friend by stealth, and have recourse to stratagem to convey her letter to the Rectory, whence it was to be forwarded. For to such a pitch had Harbottle now carried his suspicions, that he would have insisted upon reading the contents of the epistle, which if he had seen them, would have corroborated his previously expressed opinion, that his wife was making up a match between the "Captain" and "the Parson's Daughter."

Thus it was that mistrust on the one side naturally bred deception on the other, and the present life of the Squire and his lady appeared to present rather a series of evolutions

and manœuvres, than the interchange of kindness and affection, by which it had been hitherto illustrated, and although the sufferings of Fanny were considerably aggravated by the sort of interference and *surveillance* to which she was subjected, there is no denying the fact that she herself had been the primary cause of all her subsequent afflictions.

Nothing can more strongly point out to women situated as Fanny was, the absolute necessity of maintaining the straight course, deviating neither to the left nor to the right, than her own particular case. The moment her delicacy had been alarmed—the instant her mind was awakened to the state of her feelings she acted morally, virtuously, and heroically—but this was in the second stage of the proceedings; and disguise it or palliate it as we may, Harvey must have become an object of much greater interest to her than he ought to have been, at the period when she felt it necessary to to her character and comfort that they should part. Once admitted, the passion so closely resembling friendship at its birth, goes on gradually gaining an influence, till at last—as was the case with poor Harvey—its victims awaken too late to a certainty of the delusion.

But to return to Lord Weybridge. When his Lordship got to Dale Cottage, there stood the carriage waiting ; he had been talking of Emma and himself, and had no idea how time flew.

“ Well,” said Lady Frances, “ and now whom have you seen ? ”

“ Oh,” said George, “ the Squire and his lady, of whom I have taken leave ; but, as you told me, the Rector and Emma are gone to that infernal watering place.”

“ I dare say,” said Lady Frances, “ you contrived to send her your remembrances through the Squire’s lady, who is her great friend and confidante.”

“ I did, indeed,” said George ; “ and I should have been very ungrateful if I had not. But, come, you say I must go, and the sooner, therefore, the better. You know how much I hate farewells and adieus.”

“ And yet you have been making them,” said her ladyship.

“ Yes, my dearest mother,” said George ; “ but parting from a parent, upon an expedition like this, is a very different affair indeed from bidding good-bye to a casual acquaintance.”

“ You *will* write to me the moment you get to town, George,” said her ladyship.

“ Rely upon me,” replied her son ; “ I will tell you every thing that happens ; and if I find that any thing intricate occurs, I will run down to you and talk it over. Upon my honour,” continued he, “ now the moment approaches, I feel it to be one of trial and difficulty ; my position is altogether new and exciting, but, strange as it may appear, I don’t feel half so happy as I am sure I ought to be.”

“ Of course not, George,” said her ladyship, “ because the dreadful events by which you are so placed naturally disturb your mind.—I hope, by the way, poor dear Lady Weybridge hadn’t her beautiful diamonds on board the yacht with her at the time of the fatal accident. I should not think she had.”

“ It makes little difference to me,” said George, “ whether she had or not. I want no diamonds ; and I declare to Heaven, now that I am stepping into the carriage, to take possession of I know not how many thousands a-year, I would, if I could afford it, give twice as much, if the people were all alive again, and I in the quiet possession of just such an income as would support me comfortably with——”

“ Catharine—— ?”

“ Catharine be—hanged, my dear mother,” said the vehement baron ; “ you’ll forgive the strength of my language.—No, no, I mean with her to whom I am sincerely attached, and—”

“ — Come, come,” said Lady Frances ; “ let Roberts, call your carriage. Get away with you, you horrid Goth ;—and don’t talk of attachments to any body just now, except to me. Kiss me, my dear George, and begone. Heaven speed you in all your proceedings, and make you a better man, if there can be one, than your dear father was, as you are now a greater.”

Fervently embracing each other, the fond mother and dutiful son separated ;—she retired to her boudoir, to write more letters, and he dashed away for London.

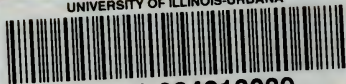
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